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THE ROMANCE OF IRISH HEROINES

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"A GREEN TREE"
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To
these—
the Loyal
Daughters of the
"Dear Land of the Heart's Desire"—
this book is dedi-
cated in love
and in
hope

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"THE POOR OLD WOMAN."

What has she there—within her wide cloak's fold
  Wrapped warm—this woman of wide, wistful eyes,
Who watches for the dawn through storm and cold,
  With patience waiting for the mists to rise?

What makes her patience power, her sufferings gain?
  What makes her strong to shelter, love, and pray,
With head uplifted beneath driving rain,
  While weary for the coming break of day?

What but the strong young child, brave-eyed, and bold,
  Won by her sufferings, fruit of love and stress,
Old Ireland's offspring, young life from the old,
  Her child—Young Ireland—nothing more—or less!

L. M. McCraith.

["The poor old Woman."—"*An t-sean Bean bochd*"—has long been one of the symbolical names for Ireland.]

INTRODUCTION.

HISTORY gives us our measuring-point. By it alone can we calculate the progress of the world, and our own particular corner of it. Some people are apt to think that Ireland has no separate history of her own worth considering. Others find her history confused, sad, or difficult, wanting land-marks and out-standing rulers. Others, again, look at Irish history through their own sympathies or prejudices, and cannot always picture Ireland as compared with contemporary countries, or realize the peculiar way in which Ireland was set apart.

The sources of early Irish history are the old MSS., and Annals, written in a language which the English did their best to stamp out. From earliest times, the Irish were a scholarly and a literary people, who honoured their bards, ollaves (historians), and brehons (judges) equally with their kings. Under English rule, the position of these was very different. They were gradually dispersed, persecuted, or starved out. Geoffry Keating wrote his *History of Ireland* when hiding in a cave in the Glen of Aherlow. Duald MacFerbis, hereditary historian of Lecan, was stabbed to death at eighty, by a settler whom he reproved for insulting a woman. The historians of later Ireland were chiefly English, who found themselves in an uncongenial country, and wrote about it as they found it. Now-a-days Irish people are beginning to find out, from a study of their own language and literature, that they have a history which is a possession—

something more than a mere collection of legends, and accounts of defeats.

In early times Ibernia was divided—like England in the later days of the Saxon Heptarchy—into many little kingdoms, separated by great forests, bogs, or rivers, and ruled over by kings who were practically clan chieftains. These had their drilled armies, their orders of knights, their bards, harpers, ollaves, brehons, and shanachies (or story-tellers and reciters). The shanachies filled much the position of our novelists and journalists to-day. The kings and chief men lived in wooden houses, the people in huts of woven wattle, daubed with clay. They had cunningly made weapons, beautifully shaped vessels, and ornaments, which are still marvels of workmanship and design. After a time, these petty kings chose one of their number to be High King. But this position of Monarch of Ireland, or Ard-Righ (pronounced Aurth Ree) was never hereditary. The Ard-Righ was always elected, as was his Tanist (next) or successor. An arrangement made about the 9th century after Christ caused him to be chosen alternately from the two great divisions, or Halves, the Southern Half (Leth Mogha) or the Northern Half (Leth Cuinn). These great divisions of North and South remain to-day.

Into a community by no means backward compared with other nations at that time, and in advance of western Europe in scholarship, by reason of its hitherto unmolested isolation, came the Northmen, and the Danes. Like all sea-going people, they were cleverer than those who lived out of land, and they were builders of cities, as well as ships. No national stand was made against these plundering invaders until the days of Brian Boru. The

Irish fought them, and occasionally defeated them, but, too often, they made alliances with them, and used them as a means of fighting with each other. The Danes—as the English did later—profited by these divisions. Finally, a Danish Kingdom was established in Ireland, with the other petty kingdoms, and became stronger than any of them. The petty kings quarrelled with, and plundered, each other unceasingly, the Ard-Righ was no longer supreme, and, in 1168, one of these—Dermod MacMurrough, King of Leinster—appealed to the King of England to help him against his enemies. This brought about the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland.

The want of combination under one central head, or in one place, made it easy for the English to keep their foothold in Ireland. But the English conquest of Ireland was a very slow business. It was no definite and dateable event, like the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. The establishment of English rule was left to private adventurers, whose rewards were the spoils of the vanquished. There was no wedding of a King of England with an Irish princess, like the marriage of the Conqueror's son, Henry I., with the heiress of the rights of the Saxon, Edgar Atheling. Eva MacMurrough, who married Strongbow, had no rights according to Irish law, and Strongbow had none from the King of England. Indeed, Henry II. discountenanced him, and came over himself to receive the submission of the Irish Kings, which was given only by some of them. English and Irish never amalgamated as did Saxon and Norman.

Instead of amalgamating, the English who settled in Ireland became absorbed. "When the first shock of invasion had passed, the old and the new races settled

down as one people." This was greatly owing to the women of Ireland. The English married Irish wives, and conformed to the Irish custom of fosterage, by which a nobleman's child was brought up at nurse in the home of peasant foster-parents. Mother Eire folded these strangers into her bosom with her own children. The great nobles, Norman and Irish, the heads of the Geraldines, the de Burghos (Burkes), the O'Briens, the O'Donnells, the O'Neills, and the rest, now occupied much the position of the petty kings. There was still no combination, and no head. Nevertheless, trade and commerce and civilization went on much as they did elsewhere. There was indeed the English Pale, a small tract of country about Dublin, garrisoned by the English, and fortified by castles. But the Pale was only a part, and a small part, of Ireland.

In an evil hour—the Statute of Kilkenny was passed in 1367—came penal laws. Marriage, fosterage or submission to Irish ordinances became high treason. The use of Irish names, or the Irish language, was punished by the forfeiture of all estates. No Irishman (that is, one who had not purchased "a charter of denization") might hold a benefice, or enter a monastery. And, finally, "It was strictly forbidden to entertain any native bard, minstrel, or story-teller, or admit an Irish horse to graze on the pasture of a liege subject" of England. The Irish were shut out by these restrictions from participating in the great revival of scholarship which, in those days of the New Learning, was then flooding Europe with light.

These penal laws, and many more, followed the Statute of Kilkenny. Together with the Tudor wars, they were the true causes of the "unmaking of Ireland." The days

of the Reformation followed. In them, Ireland became a pawn in a great political game. Little piece that she was, she was sacrificed. The rulers of Ireland became Protestant, and became Protestant willingly. Ireland never did. Religion and patriotism became, alike, rebellion to the only rule left in Ireland.

Once men make wrongs, only God can right them. But He *does* right them. It is a slow process, because mending takes longer than tearing, growth than breaking off, building than throwing down. But slowly it goes on by means of the mind and the reason which God gives to each. Because of this, it becomes the duty of each one, man and woman, to educate and quicken the powers which they have been given, remembering always that—

"Hate and distrust are the children of blindness,
Could we but see one another t'were well,
Knowledge is sympathy, charity, kindness,
Ignorance, only, is maker of hell."

History is the study of great ideas and of great principles, rather than of great men and women. But it is the study of great men and women which gives to history its interest. Personalities have even been inextricably connected with great ideas, and principles, and upon personalities have turned the great events of the world.

Now and then a little rift comes in the envious mists of time. The greyness parts, and we catch the gleam of a torque of gold—the colour of a robe—the brief expression on a human face. The mists close in again, but the incident remains stamped upon memory and imagination alike. Henceforth, the men and women who

"Fought and sailed, and loved, and ruled, and made our world,"

are no longer shadows. They are real. We begin to wonder what these men and women of long ago were like—what they said—how they felt? What were their circumstances—surroundings—difficulties—dispositions?

Sometimes it is easy to tell. There was a bard, or an ollave, who wrote down what he actually saw, or a disciple, or a retainer, who wrote the life of his teacher, or master, and the actual manuscript has been preserved to this day. Perhaps there was some well known song, or story, about a notable man or woman which has been handed down among the people, and recorded before it was too late. Now and then—not very often in Ireland—there is a sculptured figure upon a tomb. More often there are letters and documents, written by these people, and about them, which seem, as it were, to shed a flood of light into a closed room. From sources such as these have the following stories of remarkable Irishwomen been written.

The position and circumstances of women in the early times in Ireland are, naturally, full of interest to the girls and women of Ireland to-day. The subject has much to teach them. In the old Irish MSS. which are now yielding up their treasures to patient and loving translators and searchers, there are constant references to notable women, their position, and their pursuits. In the oldest of these, copied from others older still, there are even glimpses of the days before men were civilized when they lived in tribes, in the open. But even then, the women of Ireland were something more than just slaves, and chattels. They were the weavers, the doctors, the readers of the runes (or wise sayings), the advisers upon peace and war. They

were also their husbands' companions in warfare. In an old record it is written :—"The work which the gentlewoman had to do was to go to battle, and battle-field encounter, and to camping, and fighting and to hosting, and wounding. On the one side she would carry her bag of provisions, on the other her babe. Her wooden pole upon her back. Thirty feet long it was, and had at the one end an iron hook which she would thrust into the tresses of some woman in the opposite battalion."

This old rude life was changed by the coming of Christianity, with its higher ideal of Womanhood. St. Adamnan, who was the successor of St. Columba at Iona, and who wrote St. Columba's *Life*, gave a remarkable judgment concerning women from the Rath of the Synods at Tara, in the seventh century. It is called the *Cáin Adamnan*, or Adamnan's Law concerning Women. It has lately been translated by Professor Kuno Meyer.

Adamnan, who was born in 624 A.D., was devoted to his mother. One day she said to him :—"Your dutifulness is good; however, that is not the duty that I desire, but that you should free women for me, free them from encounter, from camping, from fighting, from hosting, from wounding, from slaying, from the bondage of the cauldron." The two had just seen a battlefield, near Drogheda, where many women lay slain, with their babes on their breasts, motherless.

Adamnan determined to fulfil his mother's desire, but to do so, he had to endure great tortures, and horrible penances for many years. At last angels came to deliver him from these, but he said :—"I will not arise until women are freed for me." And the angel answered :—"By reason of your sufferance you shall have all you ask of God."

So it came about. At first, the chieftains were angry at Adamnan's new law, but, in the end, the Saint prevailed. After a time, securities and bonds were given to him "for the freeing of women," and the guarantors "gave three shouts of malediction on every man who would kill a woman with his right hand, or his left, by a kick, or by his tongue, so that his heirs are the alder, the nettle, and the corncrake."

This curious old story, which seems something more than a mere legend, goes on to say :—

"Now after the coming of Adamnan, no woman is deprived of her testimony, if it be bound in righteous deeds. For a mother is a venerable treasure, a mother is a goodly treasure, the mother of saints, and bishops, and righteous men, an increase of the Kingdom of Heaven, a propagation upon earth. Adamnan suffered much hardship for your sakes, O women, so that ever since Adamnan's time one half of the house is yours, and there is also a place for your chair in the other half, so that your contract and your safeguard are free. And the first law made in Heaven and on earth for women is Adamnan's law."

The *Cáin Adamnan* goes on to give details of the punishments to be inflicted for the killing of a woman, or even for a blow, or an insult.

St. Adamnan, the northerner, the prince of the Hy-Neil, lives still in his Law. Never did man make a better, nor a law better obeyed. In no country do women receive more honour and reverence than in Ireland.

At all periods of Ireland's history, even in the darkest, the women of Ireland have ever been held in the highest esteem. In the famous records, such as *The Annals of*

the Four Masters, The Annals of Lough Cé, the *Chronicon Scotorum,* the names of illustrious women are chronicled side by side with those of men. And these names are not few.

Some of the women who are seen through the mists of time with more distinctness, are described in this little book. It has been written for the young Irishwomen who are growing up in what is, in many respects, a New Ireland, as well as for those to whom Ireland, though distant, remains dear, as their Mother Land.

Irishwomen have much in Eirinn's past of which they may well be proud. But mere pride in the past is a poor, empty thing if it cannot inspire greater deeds in the present. Eirinn the Mother, renews her youth in her worthy children. It is the young, fleet of foot, and quick of brain, with the light of morning in their faces, and their hearts full of hope and courage, who must carry on the torches of faith, endeavour, and high ideals. Their way has been smoothed now by the passage of many feet. Old difficulties have been worn away, or removed. Maybe other difficulties—different—have arisen. But the qualities which make men and women great and good remain the same.

The women whose stories are told in this little book were not all good and great. Some were saints, some sinners. Some, like ourselves, were made up of the characteristics of both. They were shaped and moulded by the lessons of life on earth long ago. Each was the product of her particular period, and upon that period, for good or for ill, each left her mark. These earthly lives of theirs have their lessons to-day.

An old proverb says:—"To-day is the Child of

Yesterday." This is true, but to-day is ours. What are we going to make of it? What kind of a Yesterday is this To-day of ours going to make for those who follow us?

The answer—in the main—lies with the daughters of this Mother-land of ours—whatever their lot in life, and wherever they may be. Their traditions of Womanhood are high. Their ideals must be even higher.

CHAPTER I.

MACHA.—THE BUILDER.

One of the first land-marks of Irish history, and the first date upon which much reliance may be placed, is the building of the Palace of Emhain Macha—"the height of Macha"—now known as Navan Fort, two miles from Armagh. As the founding of Rome is the starting-point of Roman history, so Irish history begins with the founding of Emhain. The date is given as about 330 years before Christ. Alexander the Great was then conquering Asia, Aristotle, the philosopher, and Demosthenes, the orator, were writing and speaking in Greece. The building of Emhain Macha was the work of a woman—Queen Macha, Mong Ruadh ("Macha of the Red Tresses").

Old bardic tales tell of this ruddy-haired queen, and of another queen, Meave (pronounced Mab), who lived in later times. It is difficult to take either of these women out of the romantic framework of legend, of song, and of story that surrounds them. Yet it seems certain that these women actually lived, and made themselves felt, long ago. The marvellous and supernatural attributes with which these real people have been endowed are doubtless based upon actual happenings, even if not literally true.

The story of Macha is particularly interesting, because it gives us a glimpse of the position of an Irishwoman in primitive and tribal times. Even in those rude days, men

were willing to give authority and obedience to a woman strong enough to maintain it. That Macha's personality was remarkable and noteworthy is plain enough from the old records. In them we seem actually to see the Queen at the head of her troops, her red locks flowing in the wind, and her heavy cloak clasped upon her right shoulder with the great brooch—of which we shall hear later—in order that her strong right arm might be free.

Macha was the only child of Aedh Ruadh (Red Hugh), of Ulster, who claimed the Kingship of the Ulidians. Aedh had spent all his life fighting for this chief Kingship against two other princes, his first cousins, Dithorba and Kimbaoth (sometimes spelt Cimbaeth). At last, worn out with warfare, the three came to an agreement that they should reign over the Ulidians in succession, each for seven years, until each had enjoyed royal power three times. Aedh was the first of the three to die. He was drowned in that dangerous ford of Erne—Assaroe (now Ballyshannon). Dithorba reigned his allotted time. Kimbaoth followed. Then, when the turn came that should have been Aedh's, Macha, Aedh's only child, claimed the right to succeed to the throne in her father's place.

Dithorba and his five sons were very angry. They would not hear of Macha's claim. No woman, they declared, could fill the throne of Uladh, and rule over a people so strong and war-like. Dithorba and his sons were men of great courage and ambition, but Macha was no less strong and enterprising. She summoned quickly her father's retainers, and declared war against Dithorba. Soon a great army gathered round her, and after a desperate battle, she won a signal victory over Dithorba

and his sons. Having thus vindicated her right to succeed her father for a reign of seven years, Macha ruled as the first Irish Queen of whom we have any record.

Macha strengthened her regal position still further by marrying Kimbaoth, the second claimant prince. After seven years, it happened that Dithorba died, and his five sons again put forth their claim to the kingdom. Macha then declared boldly that she held her kingdom not under the old arrangement, but by right of conquest. There was a second great battle, and again Macha was victorious. The sons of Dithorba were routed, their army dispersed, and they themselves fled away, and hid in the forests of Connacht.

Single handed, Macha set out to capture these fugitives by stratagem. She disguised herself as a leper by rubbing the dough of rye over her face, and followed the young men into the dense woods of Burren, in the north of the present Co. Clare. Here she found the five brothers. They were cooking a wild boar, of which they offered her a share, asking her for news. The supposed leper talked with them, and so charmed were they with her wit and conversation, that when she left them, one of the brothers followed her into the depths of the forest. "Here," says the chronicle, "Macha Mong Ruadh (Red Tressed) bound him in fetters." Whether these were actual bonds, or magic spells, or merely the chains of the Queen's fascinations, we are free to conjecture.

Macha left him "tied," and returned to his four brothers. These questioned Macha closely concerning their brother. The woman answered that he was ashamed to return, since he had been captivated by the bright

glances of one who was a leper. "He needeth not to be ashamed"—said they—"since we have all been captivated ourselves by the beauteous lustre of your eyes."

One by one, Macha wiled away each of the sons of Dithorba singly with her into the forest. One by one she left each bound by her arts, like the first. Then, captive, and "tied together," she brought them, all five, to Emhain.

Having taken the five brothers captive by her stratagem, Macha called together her chieftains, who angrily, and with one accord, demanded that the prisoners should be put to death. Then Macha recalled to them the Brehon law, made even then, against the killing of captives taken in battle. "Not so," said she, "for that would be against this law, and would render my reign unrighteous. But, let them be made bond-slaves, and condemned to dig for me a rath which shall be the eternal seat of Ulster for ever!"

Then, Macha took from her shoulder her great brooch. No doubt it was shaped like the beautiful brooches, twenty-two inches long, made of bronze and enamels, which are still to be wondered at, and admired, in the safe keeping of the National Museum in Dublin. It was, very likely, quite as large as the great silver one—of which, unfortunately, fragments only now remain—that explains to us the old laws of recompense for injuries done by brooch-pins. With the massive, and moveable pin, Macha traced out a line on the soft earth, and set her captives to dig earthworks on that line. Thus was planned the site of Emhain Macha, which was so called from the two Gaelic words, "eo" a pin, or brooch, and "muin" the neck—the Palace of Macha's Brooch-Pin.

The palace was splendidly built, as the great rath, with its double enclosure of bank and mound, shows unto this day. It still stands a couple of miles to the west of Armagh. For six hundred years it was the chief residence of the Ulidian Kings. Then, in 332 A.D., when King Fergus Fogha was defeated by the Collas of the race of Hermon, it was burned and pillaged, and never again used as a royal residence. But during those six hundred years, Emhain Macha loomed large throughout old records. There was the house of Conchobar MacNessa, and there the Red Branch Knights assembled. In the later legends there are wonderful descriptions of Emhain. "A fine place it was, having three houses in it, the Royal House, the Speckled House, and the House of the Red Branch." There was also the House of Pain or the Soldiers' Sorrow, evidently an hospital. "In the King's House there were three times fifty rooms, and the walls were made of red yew with copper rivets, but in King Conchobar's own room, which was in the front of the house, and large enough for thirty warriors, the walls were inlaid with bronze, wrought with silver on it, and carbuncles and precious stones, and great gold birds, with jewelled eyes, so that day and night were equally light therein. A gong of silver hung behind the King, from the roof-tree, and when he struck it with his Silver Wand of Silence, with the three golden apples upon it, all the men of Ulster were silent. All valiant warriors found space in the King's house, and no man pressed upon another."

In the House of the Red Branch—or Creeveroe—Conchobar's fighting men assembled. Each had his appointed place at table under his own device, and all sat

with their backs to the wall, so that no man could be taken unawares. In the Speckled House were stored all shields, spears and swords. Hence its name, by reason of the flecked brightness of the weapons shining within it. But all this glory belongs to later days than those of the Red-Haired Queen.

Macha reigned for "twice seven years." There is no record of her having had any children, nor do we know the date, nor place, of her death. But she was slain by Reachtaid Righdhearg "of the Red Fore-arm," who succeeded her, and reigned two years in her stead. Then, he, too, met his end at the hand of Ugaine Mor (Great), in revenge for the slaying of Macha, because she was Ugaine's foster-mother.

Geoffry Keating, the old Irish historian, tells us that :— "The Princess Macha was a lady of invincible spirit, of a strong, robust constitution, able to endure hardships, of a bold and enterprising genius, and always mentioned with great honour and respect by the Irish historians." Her monument was Emhain Macha. Of Emhain Macha, the famous and the splendid, there remains to-day but Navan fort. One whose lot has been cast in Armagh, St. Patrick's city hard by, and who loves well the associations and surroundings of the historic place, thus describes it. Having pictured the wonderful past, Miss E. Alexander says :—"Of all this there is not now left one stone upon another; unless fragments of wall are buried under the grassy mound where sheep browse, and the only objects of interest are a few persevering whin-bushes, and the vulgar yellow of democratic rag-weeds. There is a circular ditch, an outline of scanty trees, and that is all there is now to be seen of kingly, exquisite Emhain."

CHAPTER II.

MEAVE.—THE RULER.

The story of Meave, Queen of Connacht, is found in the most famous epic of Irish history—the *Táin Bo Cuailgne* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley). This old heroic tale is to Irish history what the epic of the fifty Argonauts, who sailed with Jason to bring back the Golden Fleece, is to Greek history. It is one of the wonderful stories of the world. The old transcripts, copied about the twelfth century from still older versions, have recently been translated into German, and into English, and have been carefully studied and explained.

Queen Meave ruled about three hundred years later than Queen Macha. She lived about the time that Cleopatra ruled in Egypt, and before the Romans discovered Britain.

Eochaidh, King of Connacht, had three sons—Breas, Nar and Lughair—and three daughters—Eithne, Clothra Meave—each of whom, writes an ancient poet, was fit to be the bride of a king. Eochaidh had a stronghold at Cruachain (Rathcroghan in Roscommon) and ruled a large tract of the West. Even as a girl, his daughter Meave seems to have outshone her sisters.

Conor King of Uladh (Ulster) heard of Meave, and desired her for his wife. Her father consented, and sent Meave to the North to him, but Meave refused to remain with Conor, and returned to her father's court, thus

making Conor her enemy for life, although he afterwards married her sister Eithne.

About this time Eochaidh's three sons rebelled against their father. A great battle was fought by Ath Cumair, a ford near Mullingar, and the three young men were slain. The victory, however, did not secure peace. Eochaidh, famous, it is recorded, for his sighing, must have had much to sigh about, for the men of Connacht continued in revolt. Eochaidh determined to make his youngest daughter Queen in the place of her brothers, and this he did, evidently knowing her strength of mind, and vigour of character. To strengthen her position, and his own, Eochaidh then married Meave to Ailill, a powerful chieftain of Connacht, and as Queen of Connacht in her own right, Meave ruled from Cruachain. This Ailill died soon afterwards, and about the same time Eochaidh died also.

Twice had Meave been married for political reasons. Now, finding herself a young widow, and an independent Queen, Meave determined to find a husband for herself. She started upon a royal progress for the purpose of visiting the various courts, and making her own choice. One day, Ross-Ruadh, King of Leinster, the father of seven sons—whom he seems to have been badly able either to manage, or to provide for—was holding his Court at Naas. There was much commotion when the Queen of Connacht's heralds arrived, in their "yellow silken shirts, and grass green mantles," and demanded audience of Ross the Red on behalf of their Queen, who proposed to stay at his Court! Queen Meave went no further than Naas in search of a King-Consort. She chose Ross-Ruadh's youngest son—whose name chanced to be the same as that

of her previous husband, Ailill—a pretty boy of some seventeen years, and about sixteen years younger than herself.

Ailill and Meave ruled together for many years. One will was supreme, and that will was Meave's. The boy King-Consort appears as characterless and submissive. "There is a distinct tone of ironical humour in the way in which the old chroniclers speak of the relations between Meave and Ailill, and of the presents with which she endowed him." Several sons, and two daughters, Findabhair, and Lindabar, were born to the royal pair.

On one occasion, a dispute arose between Meave and Ailill, about their respective wealth and treasures, which dispute led to a comparison of their property. The Queen had lavished gifts upon her young husband.

"Did I not honour thee above thy fellows in making thee my husband, and thou but a younger son of the King of Leinster?" said Meave. "Did I not present thee with twelve suits of robes, a chariot worth three times sixty-three cows, the breadth of thy face of red gold," [probably a golden lune, to be worn on the head, such as are preserved among the gold ornaments in the National Museum, Kildare Street, Dublin], "and a bracelet of Findruine (silver bronze) to fit thy left wrist?"

The account of their conversation and controversy is given at length in the *Táin*, which goes on to say:—

"There were compared before them all their wooden and metal vessels of value; and they were found to be equal. There were brought to them their finger-rings, clasps, bracelets, thumb-rings, diadems, and gorgets of gold; and they were found to be equal. There were brought to them their garments of crimson, and blue,

and black, and green, and yellow, and mottled, and white, and streaked; and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their great flocks of sheep from greens, and lawns, and plains, and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their steeds, and their studs from pastures, and from fields, and they were found to be equal. There were brought before them their great herds of swine from forests, from deep glens, and from solitudes; and they were found to be equal. Their herds and their droves of cows were brought before them from the forests, and most remote solitudes of the province, and on counting and comparing them, they were found to be equal in number and excellence. But there was found, among Ailill's herds a young bull, which had been calved by one of Meave's cows, and which, not deeming it honourable to be under a woman's control, went and attached himself to Ailill's herds."

The name of this remarkable animal was Finnbheannach, or the White-horned, and it was found that the Queen had not among her herds one to match him. This was a matter of deep disappointment to her. She immediately summoned MacRoth, her chief courier, and demanded of him if he knew where a young bull to match Finnbheannach could be found in the five provinces of Eirinn.

MacRoth answered that he knew where there was a better and a finer bull—namely, in the possession of Daré, in the cantred of Cuailgné (the peninsula which encloses Carlingford Bay on the south) in the province of Ulster, and that his name was the Donn Cuailgné, or Brown Bull of Cuailgné.

"'Go thou then,' said Meave, 'with a request to Daré

from me for the loan of the Donn Cuailgné for my herds for one year. Tell him that he shall be well repaid for his loan; that he shall receive fifty heifers, and the Donn Cuailgné, back at the end of that time." The Queen continued, 'Thou mayest make another proposition to him, namely, should the people of the district object to his lending us the Donn Cuailgné, he may come himself with his bull, and he shall have the full extent of his own territory given him of the best land in Magh-Ai (the plains of Roscommon) a chariot worth thrice seven *cumhals* and my future friendship."

A *cumhal*, by the way, was "a bond-maid." Her value was reckoned as equal to three cows. Hence a *cumhal* became a standard of value. Ailill's chariot must have cost sixty-three cows.

The courier set out, and in due time delivered his message to Daré Mac Fiachna, who received him hospitably. He agreed to accept Meave's terms, and sent MacRoth and his nine men to a distant part of his dwelling to be entertained.

In the course of the night, when deep in their cups, one of the nine Connacht men said to another :—'It is a truth that the man of this house is a good man, to grant to us nine messengers what it would be a great work for the other four great provinces of Eirinn to take by force—namely, the Donn Cuailgné.' But a third of the nine men interposed, and said 'that small thanks were due to Daré, because if he had not consented freely to give the brown bull, he should have been compelled to do so.'

At this moment Daré's chief steward with others laden with food and more drink entered, and hearing the vaunt of the third Connacht man, flew into a passion, and cast

down the meat and drink before them, without inviting them to partake of it.

Then they went and told their master, and Daré swore by his gods that Meave should not have the Donn Cuailgné either by consent or by force.

Daré's refusal exasperated Meave, and she gathered together her forces, determined to make good her claim by force of arms. The great army of the Queen set out from Cruachain in Roscommon, crossed the Shannon above Lough Ree, and poured into Meath, as far as Kells. Meave's hosts now encountered the hero Cuchulain, whose well-known story is too long to tell here, and whose marvellous feats fill many pages of the *Táin*. Meave's army was divided into three parts.

"The first party came with uncut hair; they wore green cloaks, with silver brooches; the shirts which they wore next their skin were interwoven with thread of gold. The second company had closely cut hair, light grey cloaks, and pure white shirts next their skin. The third and last party had broad cut, fair, yellow, golden, loose flowing hair upon them; they wore crimson embroidered cloaks, with stone-set brooches over their breasts (in the cloaks) and fine long silken shirts falling to the insteps of their feet."

The forces of Daré and Meave met at Kells. With Meave was her husband Ailill, and their daughter Findabhair 'The Fair-browed.' When they had encamped for the night, the Queen invited all the leaders of the army to feast with her, and in the course of the evening contrived to enter into a private conversation with each of the bravest and most powerful among them, exhorting them to valour and fidelity in her cause, and

secretly promising to each the hand of her beautiful daughter in marriage.

After a fierce battle, Meave captured the Brown Bull, and took him away towards her own territory, but this is but part of the old story, which tells of many other encounters, both between single heroes, and opposing hosts. In the last great fight, the hosts of Connacht were broken, and Meave herself only escaped by the chivalry of Cuchulain, who protected her until she was across the Shannon, while her army was dispersed. But Meave still kept the Brown Bull of Cuailgné, the cause of these great commotions, and carried him into her own territory across the boundary river with her.

When the Donn Cuailgné found himself in a strange territory and among strange herds, he raised such a loud bellowing as had never before been heard in the province of Connacht. On hearing these unusual sounds Ailill's bull—Finnbheannach, 'the White-horned,' knew that some strange and strong foe had entered into his territory. He immediately advanced at full speed to the point from which they issued, where he soon arrived in presence of his noble enemy. The sight of each other was the signal for battle. Men ceased from their own encounter to watch this new conflict. The province rang with the echoes of their roaring. The sky was darkened by the sods of earth they threw up with their feet, and the foam that flew from their mouths. Faint-hearted men, with women and children hid themselves in caves, caverns, and clefts of the rocks, while even the most veteran warriors but dared to view the combat from the neighbouring hills and eminences.

Finnbheannach at length gave way, and retreated

towards a pass opening into the plain where the battle raged. Donn Cuailgné, coming up with his opponent at last, raised him on his horns, ran with him past the Queen's dwelling place, tossing him, and shaking him to pieces upon his horns, and dropping the disjointed members of the 'White-horned' as he went. The loin of Finnbheannach fell from the horns of the Donn Cuailgné at Athlone, hence its name Athluain, 'the Ford of the Loin' of Finnbheannach.

"The Donn Cuailgné, having tattered his enemy to pieces, went back into his own country. He was in such a state of frenzy that all fled away wherever his approach was seen. He raced for his old home, but the people of the *bailé* [hamlet] fled, and hid themselves behind a great mass of rock. Donn Cuailgné's madness transformed this rock in his path into the shape of another bull, so that, coming with all his force against it, he dashed out his brains, and was killed.

This wonderful old story of the *Táin* is like a miniature painting in words; it sums up the age in which it is written. From it, we can gather, not merely manners and customs, divisions and geographical descriptions, particulars of dress, ornaments, weapons, musical instruments, and such like things, but we get a glimpse—as in the story of the champion Ferdia and his fight with Cuchulain at the Ford, now called Ardee—of the laws of honour and heroism in the pagan age. Reverence and respect for women, and that which, in a later period, was called chivalry, were not wanting in those rude, wild times. But the old order was drawing to its close. A better day was about to dawn.

In the *Book of Ballymote*—according to Miss Cusack's

History of Ireland—there is a passage, taken from an even older record, which says :—" In the fourth year after the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary the expedition of the Táin-Bo Cuailgné took place. Eight years after this expedition of the Táin, Christ was born."

Ailill, Meave's young husband met with a violent end. There was one Conrach (or Conal) Cearnach, who was a famous swordsman and wrestler of Dalaradia (now Down). He came with his forces against Meave's stronghold of Cruachain, and in the attack he killed Ailill with a spear-thrust. But Ailill was well avenged. As Conrach Cearnach was returning to his own place, with the spoils of Meave's royal residence, the pursuing warriors of Connacht came up with him. At " a ford on a great river in Breffni " (now known as Ballyconnell in Co. Cavan) they avenged the slaying of their Queen's Consort, and the sacking of Cruachain. They slew the northern leader Conrach, and dispersed his force utterly.

According to *The Annals of the Four Masters,* Queen Meave survived her husband, Ailill by seven years, and lived to the age of one hundred and twenty. She died in the seventieth year of the Christian Era.

Geoffry Keating gives a curious account of " The Death of Meave of Cruachain," which is here given, in a slightly shortened form.

" When Ailill had been slain by Conrach Cearnach, Meave went to dwell at Inis-Clothram on Lough Ribh [Ree?], and during her residence there, it was her wont to bathe every morning in a spring that lay near the entrance of the island. When Forbaide, son of Conor [the son of Meave's sister Eithné, and of Meave's former lover, the King of Ulster] had heard this, he came privately to

the spring, and measured with a line the distance thence to the other side of the lake. He then brought the measure with him into Ulster, and there he used to thrust two stakes into the ground, and to each of them he fastened an end of the line. He then used to place an apple on the point of one of the stakes, and standing himself at the other, he made constant practice of throwing at the apple on the opposite one until he succeeded in hitting it. This exercise he practised continually until he became so dexterous that he never missed a single throw at the apple. Shortly after this, there was a meeting of the people of Ulster and Connacht on both sides of the Shannon at Inis-Clothran, and Forbaide came thither from the east, in the assemblage of the Ulster men. One morning, while he stayed there, he saw Meave bathing, as usual, in the very same spring. He, thereupon, instantly placed a stone in his sling, and, having cast it, he hit her full on the forehead, and she instantly died, having then enjoyed the Kingdom of Connacht for ninety-eight years."

There is a great Cairn on the top of the Mountain of Knocknarea, which overlooks the town of Sligo. It is a a suggestive spot, for round that locality many legends linger. It is a region of strange tales, and recollections of the ancient dead. With that great Cairn the name of Meave is still connected. There are those who say that she still leads her hosts through the mists. But they are different hosts than those which the Queen led when she went for Daré's brown bull centuries ago. To the old Gaelic bards, Meave was an Amazon Queen, who commanded her troops in person, and led them against the men of Ulster. They describe her, with her "Aision,"

or golden crown, upon her head, seated in her war-chariot, with the war-chariots of her champions crowding round her, as she went to battle. But to others she is the Queen of the Fairy hosts. The lapse of years has thrown an obscuring halo of romance which has etherialized the warlike, masterful, passionate woman, who ruled Connacht—and her husbands—long ago. Gentle and dainty Queen Mab of Fairyland seems, at first sight, to have little in common with Queen Meave, masterful, and strong in mind and body. But into Mab has Meave been idealized by an English mind. The Elizabethan poet, Spencer, in Kilcolman Castle, his unlucky Irish home, no doubt heard many stirring stories about this great Irish-woman, and consciously, or unconsciously, wove them into his *Faëry Queen*. War-goddess—Ruler—Warrior-woman—Fairy—which was Meave? All of these—or none?

CHAPTER III.

BRIGID.—THE SAINT.

It was in 432 A.D. that Patrick, the British-born son of a Roman subject, returned on his great mission to the land of his former captivity. He converted the pagan kingdoms, he organised what Christianity already existed, and although Druidism lingered long, Patrick made the Christian faith the State religion of Ireland. He did more than this. He established "the Roman idea." That is to say, Patrick brought Eire into connection with the Church of that great Roman Empire, which had never touched the "ultimate isle" hitherto. From henceforth, Ireland was part of Christendom.

With St. Patrick there came also learning, letters, and the monastic ideal.

The name of St. Brigid, or Bride, is always connected with that of St. Patrick, but Brigid could have been only a child—twelve at most—when he died at Saul in 461. Her father was Dubhthach of the Fotharda, an illustrious Leinster family, descended from King Conn of the Hundred Battles. Her mother's name was Brotsech.

The earlier Irish Lives of St. Brigid record that Brotsech was a bondwoman, whose connection with Dubhthach caused the jealousy of his wife. Therefore Dubhthach sold his slave Brotsech to a "wise man," or druid, but reserved his right over her child, according to brehon law. The "wise man" took Brotsech to a place called Fochart, near to where Dundalk now stands, and there Brigid was born.

An old legend tells how one day, the mother, having left the child covered up in the house, went out. Shortly afterwards, her neighbours saw the house, wherein the child was, all ablaze, so that the flames reached from earth to heaven. But when they went to rescue the child, the fire appeared not, and the child was found to be unhurt. This is one of the many references to fire connected with St. Brigid which leads us to think that incidents which belonged in the first place, to the old myths, or worship, of an earlier Brigid, the old Pagan goddess of Fire, have been attributed, long years later, to the Christian saint. We know, too, that the Druids nourished a holy fire, in their worship, and that Brigid's foster-father was a druid. It is likely that, in after times, the holy woman deliberately adopted the old symbols of druidism, and used them for the furtherance of the new religion of the White Christ. As the child grew up "everything that her hand was set to used to increase and reverence God. She bettered the sheep, she tended the blind, she fed the poor." At length, Dubhthach claimed her, and took her to his own house. Here, evidently, she received Christian education befitting her father's rank. But her mother remained her constant care. She begged leave to go to her, and when her father would not grant it, she went, at last, without., Brotsech was glad at her coming, for she had grown weak and sickly. So Brigid took upon herself the dairy and the farm work, and under her hand all prospered in a manner which seemed miraculous. She taught her mother, and her foster-father, Christianity, and thus began to be "a marvellous ladder for pagans to visit the Kingdom of Mary's Son."

Brigid seems to have returned before long to her

father's household, for we read how Dubhthach "liked not his cattle and wealth to be dealt out to the poor, and that was what Brigid liked to do." We also read of her resistance to all proposals of marriage, and her prayer for ugliness, answered in the form of a pox, which disfigured one side of her face, leaving the other fair as ever. The monastic idea introduced by St. Patrick had now rooted itself in the Isle of Saints, and the fame of the holy women of the Continent was brought to Ireland. In her sixteenth year Brigid was "clothed with the white garment, and the white veil placed upon her head" by St. Mel, nephew of St. Patrick, and it is said that the form of ordaining a bishop was read over her. Eight other maidens of noble birth followed her example at the same time, and formed her first religious community. It would seem that Brigid herself gave a rule to her nuns, therefore she is justly numbered among the founders of religious orders. Her rule was long followed by all the great nunneries of Ireland.

From early girlhood until a ripe old age—for she lived until 525—Brigid devoted her long life to the advancement of religion, and of female learning. In her pious retreat, St. Brigid was a sure refuge for the unfortunate, especially those of her own sex, and the island was soon filled with the reports of her charity, her benevolence, and her miracles. The fame of her piety having gone abroad, crowds of maidens and young widows came begging for admission into her order. At first, St. Brigid founded establishments for these numerous followers in their own districts, but their increasing numbers made it necessary that she should form at least one large central house, over which she herself should preside. The

He saw her give a corner to each of four of her nuns

amusing old folk-tale of St. Brigid's Shawl belongs to this period of her career.

"Finding her followers very numerous, Brigid applied to the King of Leinster for a bit of land upon which to build her nunnery. She went in person, and the King, who saw only the beautiful side of her face, which had escaped the disfigurement of the pox, was so captivated by her that he readily granted her request. His queen, however, who was no longer young, or fair, became jealous of the Saint, and contrived that, before she departed, the King should see the other side of her face. The King was disenchanted, and refused to keep his promise of the land. St. Brigid remonstrated with him, and, at last, after much argument, the King agreed to give her as much land as her shawl would cover.

"Six months passed, and at the end of that time, Brigid came to claim this scanty gift. In the presence of the King and Queen, and their assembled court, St. Brigid took off her shawl to measure the ground with it. What was the dismay and astonishment of the King when he saw her give a corner to each of four of her nuns, who ran north, south, east and west. St. Brigid had herself spun this shawl during the past six months. It was of some web-like substance, and gradually stretched and unfolded, until it covered the whole of what is now the Curragh of Kildare. This tract of land Brigid accordingly claimed, in fulfilment of the King's word. Such, at least, is the legend, which years ago might be heard at the cottage firesides of Leinster."

St. Brigid chose the site for her "mother house" among her own people, on this green spreading plain, or *curragh,* of Kildare. Her church was built near the

Cell of the Oak—or Cill Dara—a spot which is now known as Kildare, and which, in those days, was probably the site of druidical worship under a sacred oak-tree. The oak-tree, and the Fire of the older faith, were ably adapted by the saint, with her quick, woman's insight, to the needs of Christian worship. In like fashion, we find the superhuman attributes and legends of a far earlier Bride, the Breeyith of the Ashless Fire, the great nature goddess, the Healer, the Mother of Poets, and of Fire Smiths, adapted to the historical Christian saint. In an age when such women were necessarily rare, the work which Brigid accomplished might well be accounted superhuman.

Brigid's rule did not exclude men, who were allowed to follow it, living in their separate monastic communities, and she, accordingly, appointed Conleath, a monastic bishop "to govern the Church at Kildare with her in episcopal dignity."

There is a very beautiful little story of St. Brigid and one of her nuns told in Baring-Gould's *Lives of the Saints*. He says :—"One evening Brigid sat with Dara, one of her nuns, who was blind, as the sun went down, and they talked together on into the summer night of the love of God, and of the joys of Paradise.

"Quickly the hours of darkness sped, and the sun came up again behind the Wicklow mountains, and the pure white light made the face of the earth bright and gay. Then Brigid sighed when she saw the loveliness of earth and sky, knowing that Dara's eyes were dark, and closed to all this beauty. So she prayed to God, and laid her hands on the eyes of the gentle sister.

"Then the darkness passed away from them, and Dara

saw the golden ball in the east, and the trees and the flowers and the green fields, and the *curragh* glittering with dew in the morning light. She looked for a while. Then she turned to her Abbess, saying :—'Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for it seems to me that when the world is so visible to the eyes, God is seen less clearly to the soul!' So Brigid prayed once more, and Dara's eyes grew dark again."

The fame of Brigid's learning, judgments, prophecies, and blameless life spread. We find her visited by St. Ailbe of Emly, and exchanging bells with Bishop Gildas of Wales. We hear, too, of the illuminations, and fair copies of the Gospels, made by the Abbess, and her nuns. They were famous when Giraldus Cambrensis wrote after the Anglo-Norman invasion. His descriptions almost create a wonder whether the glorious Book of Kells itself might not have been illuminated in the scriptorium of Kildare.

Giraldus Cambrensis also tells how :—"At Kildare, in Leinster celebrated for the glorious Brigid, many miracles have been wrought worthy of memory. Among the first of these that occurs is the Fire of St. Brigid, which is reported never to go out. Not that it cannot be extinguished, but the nuns and holy women tend and feed it, adding fuel with such watchful and diligent care that from the time of the Virgin [St. Brigid] it has continued burning through a long course of years, [Six hundred of them had passed when Cambrensis wrote this account] and although such heaps of wood have been consumed during this long period, there has been no accumulation of ashes. As in the time of St. Brigid, twenty nuns were engaged there in the Lord's warfare, she herself being

the twentieth, after her glorious departure nineteen have always formed the society, the number never having been increased." Particulars of the mysterious feeding of St. Brigid's fire then follow.

This fire was extinguished in 1220 by Henry de Londres, Archbishop of Dublin, who considered it a remnant of Pagan superstition. It was, however, renewed, and was extinguished finally in the days of Henry VIII.

Cambrensis also writes of "St. Brigid's Pastures" about the Abbey of Kildare "in which no plough ever turns a furrow, and though all the cattle in the province should graze herbage from morn till night, the next day the grass would be as luxuriant as ever."

At Kildare Brigid died, on the first of February, 525, and here she was buried. But many places disputed with Kildare the honour of possessing her dust, pre-eminently Downpatrick, where, by tradition, recorded by the Four Masters,

> "In Down Three Saints one grave do fill,
> Patrick, Brigid, and Columbkill,"

and where her remains may have been translated.
That triple tomb was wrecked, Holinshed says, by Lord Leonard Grey, who was beheaded in 1541. Other authorities place the sacrilege eighty years later, and attribute it to Lord Cromwell, the great grandson of Henry VIII.'s Minister. At any rate, in the troublous Reformation times, the relics of the three saints perished in the burning ruins of the desecrated Cathedral of Downpatrick. St. Brigid's head, it is claimed, is still preserved by the Jesuits in Lisbon. Dr. Reeves says:—"In the

case of all Saints of primitive times, the body was not long in the grave before it was disinterred, and enshrined, leaving the actual spot of burial little honour." Contentions over St. Brigid's ashes are of small moment. The fire she kindled is still alive.

There is much that is inspiring, as well as symbolic and suggestive, in a study of the character of the patron saint of Irish womanhood. "Looking through the haze of miracles in which her acts are enveloped, we discern a woman of great energy and courage, warmly affectionate, generous, unselfish, and wholly absorbed by a desire to promote the glory of God, and to relieve suffering in all its forms." We find this woman reverenced and consulted by chiefs and bishops. We find her holding land, and administering large communities. We know her as a patron of learning and letters, and as the foundress of education for women in Ireland. In uncivilized times we find her setting up a high ideal of womanhood, which had a marked influence upon those rude days. In any age such a woman must have been remarkable. In the sixth century she stands out like a great light, the embodiment of the Divine Afflatus which she kindled in her native land.

CHAPTER IV.

GORMLAITH.—THE GOOD WIFE.

The short record which describes how Gormlaith, "the daughter, sister, wife and mother of Kings, at the last begged her way from door to door," has something about it which at once attracts attention, and awakes interest, and enquiry.

The Great Sorrows of Gormlaith, three times Queen, are the theme of many old Celtic poems. By searching further among the meagre materials of those distant days, a few more particulars about this much tried Irishwoman may be gathered together. The first fact we find is that Queen Gormlaith was a literary woman. A translation of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* says that she "composed many pitiful and learned ditties in Irish." Gormlaith, indeed, seems to have been the earliest historical Irishwoman of whom it is recorded that she produced anything that might be called original literature, if she was not actually the first Irish poetess whose poems have been preserved.

Christianity brought with it learning, letters, and the arts of peace. The position of women improved from that of rude, fierce, and crafty warrior-wives, like Macha and Meave, to the higher and nobler position of a guide and teacher, and beneficent ruler such as St. Brigid. The old life of Ireland gradually changed. Religious communities, which had in them the essentials of Universities, sprang up at Clonmacnoise, at Glendalough, at Bangor,

at Slane, and in many other places. In these, holy men and scholars lived simple, earnest lives in their wooden huts, holding their classes in the open air, and worshipping daily in the little stone churches, which they multiplied as the community grew. They illuminated the glorious and famous manuscripts, and wrought with loving patience, noble shrines of gold-work, enamels, and jewels to contain them. They built, or perhaps adapted, the Round Towers to secure these treasures. A King of France was sent to one of these communities to get his education. Ireland became known as the Isle of Saints and Scholars, and was recognised as such, for three hundred years. There were still, it is true, hostings and slayings, campings and woundings, but many of the chiefs showed a desire to live Christian lives, or, at least, to die peaceful deaths in holy spots such as Iona, or like places of pilgrimage.

Ireland was divided among many petty Kings. These Kings elected an Ard-Righ, or High King, to be Monarch of all Ireland. This Ard-Righ ruled nominally from Tara, but in 560 A.D. St. Ruaden cursed Tara, and it was, after that, deserted as a royal residence. By degrees these various petty kingdoms and provinces were divided into Leth Mogha (the Southern Half) and Leth Cuinn (the Northern Half), with Cashel as the capital of the South, and Tara, nominally, of the North. The King of each Half was elected High-King, or Monarch, alternately. Such an arrangement, naturally, was a source of endless tribal feuds.

Strife and devastation far more terrible than any caused by these feuds were on their way to the Isle of Saints and Scholars. In the year 795, "the Pagans went

to Ireland, Rathlinn was burned, and its shrines broken, and plundered." These mail-clad sea-rovers, from Denmark and Northern Europe, were, at first, taken for peaceful merchants and traders—to the woe of those who, innocently, encountered them. This first appearance of the Danes was but the beginning of more than two centuries of invasion and conflict. "The Danes became a terror, not only to the Irish, whom they reduced to the last extremities, but to the Welsh and English. These foreigners broke open Churches and Shrines, and plundered the dead, as well as the living." From 795, until the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, Irish history is but an account of disastrous conflicts and of still more disastrous alliances, with these Galls, or foreigners. The pirates were few, but they were united, and all too successful in a country where each sept rejoiced in the depression of its rival, and where party spirit was stronger than the spirit of nationality.

These Danes came in their ships for plunder. At first, they withdrew with it, only to return. Before long they began to build forts and towns in which to secure their booty near the sea, or upon the broad mouths of the rivers. They built Waterford, and Limerick, and established the capital of their kingdom at Ath Cliath, which they named Dublin.

Encouraged by their successes, and by the divisions of the Irish, the Danes now attempted the conquest of the whole Island. This conquest was all but completed in the early part of the ninth century by the wicked and bloodthirsty Northman, whom the Irish Annalists call Turgesis. This Turgesis—who may have been no other than the celebrated Ragnar Lodbrog himself—held the

country in fear and thrall. He stationed fleets on all the great lakes throughout Ireland, and from their ships, his people ravaged the country round, and tyrannized over the unfortunate natives. He plundered, oppressed, consumed. On every house, or head of a family, he imposed a yearly tribute of one ounce of gold. If this was not punctually paid, the defaulter's nose was promptly cut off as a punishment. Hence this tax was called by the Irish the *Airgiod Srona,* that is "Nose Money." Turgesis, and his impious wife Ota, destroyed and desecrated monasteries and churches. They banished and slew bards and brehons, and destroyed works of art, and precious books.

Finally, Turgesis made dishonourable proposals for the daughter of Meloughlin of Meath, who was at the time High-King. Stung beyond endurance, Meloughlin raised the standard of revolt. He pretended to consent, but stipulated that his daughter should be accompanied by fifteen of her most beautiful, and tallest, ladies. Turgesis agreed. But the fifteen who came with the Princess were no frightened women, but stalwart young warriors, sworn to give their lives for their country's deliverance. Throwing aside their women's robes, they fell upon the tyrant, overcame him and his pirates, loaded him with chains, and threw him, chained, into Lough Owel, near Mullingar.

Turgesis dead, the Irish chiefs rallied. The Danish fleets were sunk and dispersed. The petty Kings joined forces with Meloughlin, and a great massacre of the invaders followed.

The chief of those who joined the High-King was the King of the Northern Half, Aedh (Hugh) Finnlaith,

Meloughlin's Tanist, or successor, should he survive him. Hugh Finnlaith was married to the daughter of the first sole Monarch of Scotland, Kenneth MacAlpine. Her name was Malmaria, and their son was the noble and famous prince Nial Glundubh, or "Black-knee," so called because of a distinguishing birth-mark.

In 863 Meloughlin died, and, in his turn, Hugh Finnlaith—"of the Fair Locks"—King of the Northern Half, became Ard-Righ. Most likely it was this King who lent the famous Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, upon which the Monarchs of Ireland were crowned, for the Coronation of his kinsman the King of Scotland. It never returned to Ireland, and it is now, some think, in Westminster Abbey under the Coronation Chair of the Kings of England. Hugh reigned for sixteen years, and the Annals say that he died "without violence"—evidently a circumstance unusual enough to call for special note.

The alternate succession went to the King of the Southern Half, namely Flann Siona—Flann of the Shannon—son of Meloughlin. His daughter Gormlaith must then have been a very young child, and motherless, for, soon after becoming Ard-Righ, Flann married his predecessor's widow, and Scottish Malmaria, became the second wife of Flann Siona, and again Queen of Ireland. It is quite likely that Nial Glundubh, son of Malmaria and Hugh Finnlaith, was the companion of Gormlaith's early days. Doubtless the big lad took a kindly interest in his step-father's little daughter. According to an old writer, Gormlaith grew into "a very fair, vertuous, and learned damosel."

While still very young, Gormlaith was betrothed by her

father to Cormac MacCullinan, King of Munster, one of the most remarkable men of his time. He is described as "a Prince of great learning, whose genius inclined to poetry." He was also a seer, and could read the future. Above all, he was a man of deep religious conviction. His early life was spent as a scholar, and perhaps actually as a monk, in one of those religious communities already referred to at Dysert Diarmade in Co. Kildare. In 900, when Cormac was past middle age, his tribe called him to Cashel to rule over them as king. Likely enough he left his peaceful life of prayer and study regretfully, and after much persuasion.

Nevertheless, Cormac MacCullinan made a good king. The old historian, Geoffry Keating, tells how "Cormac MacCullinan reigned over the Province of Munster with great Conduct and Moderation for seven years. During his reign, the Kingdom of Ireland enjoyed settled peace and tranquility. The Island began to recover breath after the Calamities of intestine Wars, and Foreign Invasions. The lands were manured and cultivated, and afforded plentiful crops, and so remarkable was the happiness of the Island at this time, that not a shepherd or herdsman was wanting through the whole country. The Churches, Abbeys, and Religious Houses began to be repaired and new built, for these structures were reduced to ruins by the sacriliges of the Danes. . . . Learning now revived, and many free Schools and Academies were erected for the education of Youth in Arts and liberal sciences. Their former miseries were forgotten by the inhabitants, and a new scene appeared and opened a delightful prospect of Peace, Happiness, and Prosperity. The Kings became united, and seeing this, the Danes retired to their ships again."

Cormac MacCullinan must have assumed every characteristic of a hero in the eyes of the young girl who looked forward to becoming his wife. Her later poems show that she was tenderly attached to him. We can even imagine the young princess preparing her mind to be fit for such companionship, and practising the art of poetry in which he excelled.

It appears that Gormlaith was married to Cormac, the King of Munster, but, shortly afterwards, he renounced the marriage in order to take full ecclesiastical vows, and become Bishop, as well as King of Cashel. His is described in old annals as "King, Bishop, anchorite, and scribe." He, accordingly, restored the Princess Gormlaith—with her dowry—to her father, the High-King. It is possible that Cormac was influenced in this action by a certain Abbot named Flahertach, who, unfortunately for the Bishop-King and his people—as following events proved—obtained strong influence over the saintly Cormac. Colour is given to this idea by Flann Siona's vindictive hatred of Abbot Flahertach, shown even after the Abbot's death, by his treatment of his corpse.

Flann soon found his daughter another husband. For motives of policy Gormlaith was forced to marry Carrol King of Leinster, and her father and her new husband united forces to make war upon Munster, and Cormac, ostensibly about a question of tribute.

Against his will, and better judgment, and against the wishes of his troops and allies, but overpowered by the dominating power of Abbot Flahertach, Cormac was forced to fight the great Battle of Ballaghmoon, near where Carlow now stands. In this battle, the Bishop-King lost his life. "The hind feet of his horse slipped on the

slippery road in the track of the blood, the horse fell backward, and broke his [Cormac's] back, and his neck in twain. He said, when falling, 'Into thy hands I comment my spirit' in Latin, and gave up his soul. Then the impious sons of malediction came, and thrust spears into his body, and severed his head from his body."

Cormac's head was brought to Flann, but the Monarch was angry at the desecration. He ordered the "sons of malediction" to be punished, and the Bishop-King's body to be sought out, and buried as Cormac had desired. For the King of Cashel had foreseen his end, and its manner, and had left precise directions about his burial. He also made his will, in verse—which may be read to this day—leaving rich gifts to many churches and monasteries. Not so did Flann treat the corpse of Abbot Flahertach. The impious ones had their way with that.

Carrol of Leinster was wounded in the battle. He was carried home to be cured at his palace at Naas, and Gormlaith watched over his sick bed. Seated one day at the foot of his bed, as the King was becoming convalescent, Gormlaith ventured to regret the mutilation of the dead Bishop-King, at which Carrol had assisted, and over which he now exulted. She said that the body of a good man had been unworthily desecrated. At this, Carrol became enraged, and thrust out his foot, and kicked her over on to the floor, in the presence of her attendants and ladies.

Because of this outrage, Gormlaith at once left Carrol's court, and sought refuge with her father. But Flann, instead of avenging her insult, sent her back to his ally. The High-King would do nothing to wipe out the insult to his daughter, or procure her separation from a cruel

tyrant. She appealed therefore to her young kinsman, Nial Glundubh, now King of the Northern Half. He took rapid action on her behalf. He gathered the northern septs, and marched upon Leinster, offered Gormlaith his protection, defeated Carrol, and secured for Gormlaith a separation, and a royal maintenance.

Carrol finally released Gormlaith from her marriage vows, but she refused to marry Nial Glundubh, and resided once more with her father. A year after, Carrol was killed, by the Danes of Dublin, and then Gormlaith married her devoted champion Nial.

The King of the Northern Half was a man of great personal beauty. He was a brave and generous King, whose name is remembered with affection by historians. He was, of course, the eventual successor to his father-in-law, Flann of the Shannon, who was also his step-father. Indeed, it is evident that Nial was more to Flann than even his own sons. The old man's last years were full of trouble and domestic dissensions, for his sons, Donough and Conor, rebelled against him. It was his son-in-law, Nial Glundubh, who led an army against them, and forced them to give hostages to their father. The next year after their rebellion—914—Flann Sionna, the Ard-Righ, died, and was succeeded by his son-in-law, who had so ably defended him. Eventually Donough succeeded Nial Black-Knee, and thus was Gormlaith the "daughter, wife and sister" of Monarchs of Ireland.

While Ireland was weakening herself with domestic wars, the Danes were not idle. "The rest to the men of Eire"—caused by the Danish defeats in England by Alfred the Great, as well as those in Scotland—was well-nigh over. In 912, the Chief Sitric Godfreyson recovered

his Kingdom of Dublin, and strengthened the Danish fleet at Waterford. The Galls returned to Ireland, and again began their devastations. One of Gormlaith's poems compares their coming to a blasting wind. She writes :—

"Wrath grew upon the mighty deep,
The wind in strength blew from the east.
. . . . . .
Stronger it blew, and without fail we suffered."

Poor lady! This coming meant the end of her brief happiness. Brave Nial Black-Knee summoned the tribes throughout Ireland, from Wicklow to Lough Neagh, to resist the invaders. They came at his call, and he mustered his troops upon the slopes of the Dublin Mountains. On the 17th of October, 919, was fought "the battle of Killmashogue Mountain by the side of Ath Cliath."

"Fierce and hard was that Wednesday
On which the hosts were strewn under the fall of shields,
It shall be called till Doomsday
The fatal morning at Ath Cliath."

This was the first resistance to the Danes which was worth being called national. It was also the heaviest defeat which had as yet been inflicted upon the Irish. Twelve kings were slain on the field. Among them was Conor, son of Meloughlin, heir to the High-Kingship, and Gormlaith's eldest brother, son of Flann Sionə. The High-King himself, gallant Glundubh, received a mortal wound at the hand of a Dane, by name Aniaff. He died after receiving the last rites of the Church, and Gormlaith was left desolate.

Three poems written by Gormlaith to utter her grief over the death of Nial have come down to us. In the first she bewails the fate of her country after this heart-rending loss :

"Neither nobility nor fame can save [Eire]
Since that the King is dead."

Gormlaith goes on to praise her two former husbands, but her heart is in the grave of her "beautiful, dark-knee'd Nial." She alludes to her gifts to the Church, which some had considered unnecessarily bountiful, but, says she :—

"How could I leave Nial without Heaven?"

The last verse of the poem may be thus translated—remembering always that the charm of Gaelic verse depends for the most part on an elaborate system of repetition and alliteration, which no other language can reproduce :—

"Without him prosperity is joyless.
His form my heart with sorrow fills.
That I am till Judgment left behind
Is that which fills my heart with grief."

The second poem :—"By Gormlaith the Good Wife, daughter of Flann," begins :—

"Alas! alas! My one great pain!"

and goes on in the same mournful strain.

The third of these poems is so touching and beautiful—even in a rough and unrhymed translation into English—that it will bear translation entire. "Gormlaith, the

daughter of Flann, speaks to the Priest," who is burying the husband of her heart :—

"Monk, remove thy foot!
Lift it from the grave of Nial.
Too long dost thou heap earth
On him with whom I fain would lie.

"Too long dost thou, Monk, there
Heap earth on Noble Nial,
Thou brown-haired friend, though gentle,
Press not with thy sole the earth!

"Do not too firmly close the grave
O Priest, whose office is so sad.
Rise off the fair, the dark-knee'd Nial,
Monk! Remove thy foot!

"O Mac Nial of finest gold
'Tis not my will that thou are bound, [*i.e.*, in grave-clothes],
Leave—Ah! leave his stone and grave.
Monk! Remove thy foot!

"I am Gormley, regent queen.
Daughter I of Flann the Bold!
Stand not thou upon the grave.
Monk! Remove thy foot!"

Even across the centuries we can hear the note of agony—of passion—in this short poem.

There is still another little poem, scarcely less touching than the above, in which Gormlaith tells of a grief even more bitter. It dwells on her love for her son, Prince Donnel. It describes the sorrow of her first separation

from him, when the babe was sent away from her to be fostered, as was customary with all highly-born children in those days, and for long afterwards. It goes on to tell of a separation more cruel still, when Prince Donnel had reached manhood, and was drowned, with his youthful promise unfulfilled, in Lough Corrib. Well might this Gormlaith be named Grief-Laden.

After the death of Nial Glundubh, the lot of his Queen became increasingly lonely and sad. She was a widow in wild times. Although she is called "the mother of kings," she was probably now childless. It is true her brother Donough had succeeded her husband as High-King, but we can well imagine that there was little enough liking on either side. In any case this Donough was a feeble Monarch, and, in those troubled times, his rule was little more than nominal. Gormlaith was alone; she was probably poor, and soon became friendless. The sovereign power had passed from her father's and her husband's houses.

There was one who may have protected and befriended Gormlaith for a few years. He is called "The Hector of the West," which leads us to hope he did so, for he was the brave and worthy son of a gallant father. This man was Murkertach—"of the Leather Cloaks"—the heir apparent to the Ard-Righ, a son of Nial Glundubh, by a former wife, and Gormlaith's stepson.

During Donough's long and inefficient reign, Murkertach steadily avenged the death of his father upon the Danes. He even pursued them as far as the Hebrides. In the twenty-second year of Donough's reign, Murkertach, and those leather-cloaked, picked warriors of his, made their famous "circuit of Ireland," and carried

away as hostages all the Kings in alliance with the Danes, which they brought to Donough, the High-King. Even Sitric, son of the Danish King himself, did they take as hostage. We are told of Murkertach's knightly courtesy to these hostages, and of his loyalty to the feeble Ard-Righ, whose daughter Flanna was Murkertach's first wife. Murkertach was not destined to be Monarch of Ireland. He did not out-live Donough. He died, as he had lived, in a hard contest with his father's enemies. Two years after his justly famous exploit, on March 26th, 941, Nial's worthy son met his father's end. Murkertach was slain in battle at Ardee by "Balcaire, son of Godfrey, Lord of the Foreigners of Dublin, and Ard Macha was plundered by the same Foreigners the day after the killing of Murkertach." In such wise, Gormlaith lost valiant stepson as well as husband.

Shortly after the battle of Ardee, the long reign of Donough came to an end, and a son of Murkertach eventually succeeded to the High-Kingship—such as it was. For now, Kings and High-Kings were alike powerless under the heel of the invaders, and again all Ireland groaned under the Danish thraldom.

On the death of Murkertach's son, Donnell O'Neill, the High-Kingship reverted to Meloughlin II., the last Irish King who ever held the undisputed position of elected Ard-Righ, or Monarch, of all Ireland. This Meloughlin (or Malachy) II. was the husband of another, and better known, Queen Gormlaith (or Gormley), who is the next figure in this gallery of great Irishwomen.

Nearly thirty years followed the "fatal Wednesday" at the mountain by Killmashogue, yet Gormlaith outlived them, and all her relations. Her country was changed,

and oppressed, and men went groaning. Having been successively wife of a King of Munster, a King of Leinster, and a King of Ireland, Gormlaith, at the last, wandered about, for year after year, as a poor beggar-woman. "After all which royal marriages"—says the translator of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*—"she begged from door to door, forsaken by all her friends and allies, and glad to be relieved by her inferiors."

"After wanderings many and sorrowful, Gormlaith at last received the injury which ultimately proved her death-wound. 'It came to her'—says Dr. Sigerson—'in a manner sad and touching as anything poet ever imagined. Having one night taken refuge in a humble hut, she went to sleep on a rude couch. Then "she dreamed that she saw King Neale Glunduffe, whereupon she got up, and sate in her bed to behold him, whom he would forsake, and leave the chamber; and as he was departing in that angry motion (as she thought) she gave a snatch after him, thinking to have taken him by the mantle to have kept him with her, and so fell upon one of the bed sticks of her bed, that it pierced her breast, even to the very heart, which received no cure until she died thereof.' During the fatal progress of this 'long and grievous wound' she composed more of her 'learned and pitiful ditties.'"

In the *Chronicon Scotorum* the year of Gormlaith's death is given as 947. According to another account, it was in 948, that Gormlaith "died of a wound in her chest caused by falling upon the sharp-pointed post to which her bed was tied." The *Chronicon Scotorum* adds that "Gormlaith, daughter of Flann, died, in great penitence." Was her beggary, then, part of a voluntary penance? Or was there even a sadder reason? Was there no one left,

in those days of short lives and violent deaths, to care for "the good wife," the gentle Poet-Queen, in her lonely old age? Well was she named "Gormley the Grief-Laden" since we are told that poets "learn in suffering what they teach in song."

The pathetic picture remains in our minds of the Good Wife, grown very old and sad, having survived all her children and kindred, with no one who understood the wounds in her heart, which were sorer far than that "grievous wound" in her chest, with no one—nothing—but her memories, and her heart-songs.

These heart-songs echo to-day across the ages—the songs of a loving wife and mother, Eirinn's long-forgotten royal poet.

CHAPTER V.

GORMFLAITH.—THE QUEEN.

During the childhood of Gormflaith, daughter of Murchahd, King of Leinster, who was born probably shortly after the death of the earlier Gormlaith, the Danish yoke lay heavy not on Ireland alone, but on England also. The Danish King of Dublin held sway over both countries, and extracted a grinding tribute from the Gaels as the price of peace.

"Such was the oppressiveness of the tribute, and the rent of the foreigners over all Erin at large, that there was a king from them over every territory, and a chief over every chieftancy, and an abbot over every church, and a steward over every village, and a soldier in every house, so that none of the men of Erin had power to give even the milk of his cow, nor as much as the clutch of eggs of one hen in succour, or in kindness, to an aged man, or to a friend, but was forced to preserve them for the foreign steward, or bailiff, or soldier. And though there were but one milk-giving cow in the house, she durst not be milked for an infant of one night, nor for a sick person, but must be kept for the foreigner; and however long he might be absent from the house, his share, or his supply, durst not be lessened; although there was in the house but one cow, it must be killed for the meal of one night, if means of supply could not otherwise be procured. And the most fit person of the family was obliged to take wages

the day on which he embarked with his lord, and he must be supplied with provisions as if he were at home." To these grinding conditions the Irish kings and chieftains were submissive.

There was one, however—the Irish Alfred—who struggled against these desperate odds, with a handful of his warrior Dalcassians in the forests of Clare. He was Brian, afterwards called Borhumha, Brian of the Tribute. Vainly did his brother Mahon, King of Leth Mogha, counsel submission. Brian still harried the Danes, and slew his twos and threes against enormous odds.

At last, Northumbria slipped from the Danes to Athelstane, and the tide turned in Ireland also. It was about this time, and some years after the general conversion of the Dublin Danes to Christianity, that Gormflaith, the young and beautiful Leinster Princess, was given in marriage to Olaf Cuaran, the Danish King of Dublin, and became the mother of Sitric, Olaf's son, and successor. Most probably Gormflaith was given to cement a treaty of peace, and, without reference to girlish sentiments, was made, for the first time, a Queen.

Gormflaith, called Kormalda in the *Njal Saga,* is there described as "the fairest of all women, and the best gifted in everything that was not in her own power"—*i.e.,* in all physical and natural endowments—"but she did all things ill over which she had any power"—*i.e.,* moral conduct.

Wives, we know, were regarded in these times as legitimate spoils of war, and, among the Gaels, ideas matrimonial were undoubtedly lax. For all that, the tone of curt disapproval taken by the writer of the *Njal Saga,* and also by the writer of *The Wars of the Gael and Gall,* who was, almost certainly, Brian's bard, MacLiag, and

well acquainted with the Queen, seems to indicate that they were telling of a woman who was no mere chattel, or prize of war, but one powerful, and dominant as she was fair.

Gormflaith was the wife of three kings in succession, each greater than the one before. Yet the Irish Annalists describe these three marriages as :—The Three Leaps which a woman should never leap;" that is—" the Leap at Ath Cliath "—(Dublin) when she married Olaf Cuaran, —" the Leap at Tara "—when she married Malachy II., the High-King—" and the Leap at Cashel "—when she married the great Brian Borhumha himself.

Too often at critical periods in the history of the Womanland of Eire have women intervened disastrously. Gormflaith, perhaps, was the first of these women of destiny. Assuredly she was not the last. The fatal victory of Clontarf cost more than lives of men. It cost the loss of national unity, and Clontarf was the work of Gormflaith the Queen.

Once, and once only, in all her troubled history, did Eire possess one true native sovereign of the whole island —Brian Borhumha. He was born at Kincora (Killaloe) in 941. He succeeded his brother Mahon as King of the Southern Half in 984. Henceforward, the High-Kingship became his aim. But Ard-Righ Malachy II. was no cypher. He, too, was a mighty warrior, and in 979, he won a great victory over the Danes at Tara. This victory did for his Northern Half what the victory of Sollahed—which led to the taking of Limerick, the Danish port and stronghold, by Mahon and Brian—had already done for their Southern Half. It was after this signal victory at Tara that

". . . Malachy wore the collar of gold,
Which he won from the proud invader."

The Battle of Tara won, Malachy marched upon Dublin, took it, with much booty, and "liberated two thousand captive Gaels." "Thus"—writes the *Four Masters*—"ended the Babylonish Captivity of Ireland." Probably Gormflaith was the prize of war—perhaps also the price of peace. Olaf Cuaran fled away to Iona, and penitence, while his wife took her "second Leap at Tara," and became the second wife of Malachy the High-King, and the mother of his son Connor.

Of this period of Gormflaith's life we know little, besides the fact that, in time, Malachy divorced her. We do know that Malachy's third wife, called Maelmaire ("servant of Mary") was Sitric's sister, and daughter of Olaf Cuaran. It is a dark page, and an obscure.

During the next eighteen years the power of Brian grew. They were the halcyon years, of which Moore sang in his melody "*Rich and Rare were the Gems she Wore*" when it was recorded the people were inspired by such a spirit of honour, virtue, and religion by Brian's great example and excellent administration, that a woman of great beauty, adorned with costly jewels, could, and did, travel alone through Ireland without any attempt being made upon either her honour or possessions. Brian and Malachy concluded a treaty securing each in his Half, and united their efforts against the Danes.

In the year 1000 Brian and Malachy defeated the Dublin Danes at Glenmama in the Wicklow Mountains. Olaf Cuaran's son, Harold, was among the slain, and among the prisoners was Gormflaith's brother, Maelmordha, who had succeeded to his Kingdom of Leinster

by the aid of the Danes. Sitric, the King of Dublin, escaped, and fled away for help to Aedh (Hugh) King of North Uladh.

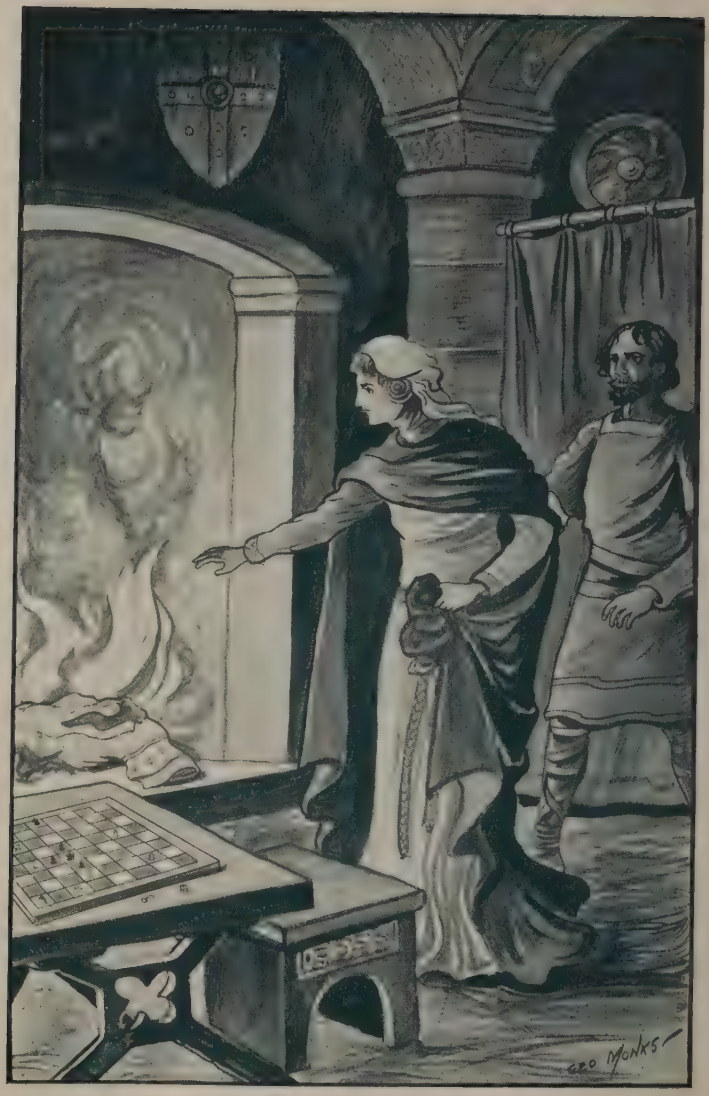
Soon, however, Sitric made his submission to Brian. He "came into Brian's house, and Brian restored his fortress of Dublin to him." More, Brian gave him his daughter as wife. It is said that, at the same time, to further strengthen this momentous alliance, Brian himself married Sitric's still beautiful mother, Gormflaith.

Probably Gormflaith's connection with Brian, the life-long rival of Malachy, was even earlier than this. The fact that Donough, her son and Brian's, was of an age to lead a band of Dalcassian marauders in 1014, and to assume the Kingship of Leth Mogha after the Battle of Clontarf, gives colour to the idea that the Queen had leaped "the third Leap at Cashel" before 1000.

About this time—1002—Brian assumed, or usurped, Malachy's position as Ard-Righ. He was now sixty-one. Malachy was fifty-three. Brian established himself in his stronghold at "the head of the weir"—Kincora—with his many sons by Mor, his first wife, and his many hostage princes, among them Maelmordha, Gormflaith the Queen's brother.

Undoubtedly, Maelmordha and his sister were the first causes of the Battle of Clontarf—that great fight upon the shores of Dublin Bay, which, if it broke for ever the power of the Danes in Ireland, also broke for ever those bonds of national union which Brian had spent a long life-time in forging. The story is told in *The Wars of the Gael and the Gall* with all the vivid and intimate touches of one who actually saw what he tells.

To King Brian at Kincora Maelmordha of Leinster



The Queen took the tunic and cast it into the fire

brought his due tribute of pine masts. While carrying them over the mountains, some dispute for precedence arose among the tribes. Maelmordha decided it by helping to carry the mast of the men of Ui-Faelain. He was wearing a silk tunic, with a border of gold, and buttons of silver, which had been given him by Brian, and seems to have been some sort of tunic of vassalage. As he lifted the heavy pine stem, one of those silver buttons was torn off, and when he came back to Kincora, he brought it to his sister to sew on for him. But "the Queen took the tunic and cast it into the fire, and she began to reproach and incite her brother because she thought it ill that he should yield service, or vassalage." Gormflaith, we are told, grew "grim" against Brian, and excited her brother's temper. That night, another dispute arose between her stepson, Murrough, and Maelmordha over a game of chess. Next morning Maelmordha left Kincora, "without permission, or taking leave," and, straightway, proceeded to organize a revolt against the High-King.

This was early in the autumn of 1013. Soon Ireland was up. Malachy's grandson and heir, Domhnall, was slain in Meath, and each side took fierce reprisals. The storm was now gathering in earnest. Both sides prepared for a mighty conflict. Riding the storm was Gormflaith. Her son, Sitric, had joined forces with her brother, and she now sent him to Sigurd in the Orkneys. Sigurd promised his assistance, provided Gormflaith's hand in marriage, and the Kingship of Ireland were secured to him. This Sitric readily promised, with his mother's approval. He then hastened to the Isle of Man—ruled by the brothers Ospak, and Brodir "the Deacon," now apostate, and known as "God's Dastard"—bent on

securing the help of the brothers upon any terms. Ospak, however, sided with Brian, Brodir's price was Gormflaith's hand, which Sitric promised to him also. Maelmordha, too, mustered a great army, while Gormflaith directed operations, and fanned the fires of wrath. We can see the fiery-tongued, strong-willed, splendid woman, in her prime no longer, yet still desired by all men, wielding her woman's power, and wielding it for her country's woe.

There are few more graphic, or precise, accounts in history than MacLiag's vivid story of the greatest of Irish victories—the Battle of Clontarf, fought on Good Friday, 1014. There can be no doubt that the writer was an eye-witness. He describes how—

"All day long the noise of battle rolled,"

until the Danes were mown down, and driven into the sea.

"Said Brian Borhumha's daughter, as she, too, watched from the walls of Dublin, 'It appears to me, that the foreigners have gained their inheritance.' 'What meanest thou, O Woman?' said Olaf's son Sitric, her husband. 'The foreigners are going into the sea, their natural inheritance,' answered she. And the son of Olaf became angered, and gave her a blow that broke her tooth out."

At the end of the long day's fighting, God's Dastard, Brodir, perceived Brian, the great old King, who was now seventy-three years old, kneeling on the outskirts of the battle, praying for victory. When he found that the reverend figure was no priest, but the great Ard-Righ himself, he dealt him a stroke which cleft his head utterly, but not before the old man had cut off Brodir's legs.

The slaughter of the Danes, and their allies, was

gigantic, but Brian's three sons, and his eldest son's son, Turlough, were slain in the battle. Maelmordha was slain also, as well as the flower of the Irish. Afterwards, there was only Malachy to resume the High-Kingship—which, theoretically, he had retained, according to some accounts, all along.

Gormflaith's son, Donough, had work enough to hold his father's Dalcassians in hand.

On the day of Clontarf more was lost than mere lives of men. When Brodir cleft Brian's brain, the great ideal of one nation, under one native king, instead of a collection of clans and units, was lost for ever. That day of Clontarf was Gormflaith's work.

We see Gormflaith the Queen, her two husbands, her two sons, and her many suitors, clearly, at Clontarf. Afterwards she disappears from history. Possibly she remained in Dublin with her son Sitric, and her step-daughter, secure behind walls. We do not know. One last glimpse do we get. The *Chronicon Scotorum* records under the year 1028:—"Gormflaith, daughter of Murchadh, son of Finn, the mother of the King of the Foreigners (*i.e.*, Sitric), and of the King of Mumhain (*i.e.*, Donough), son of Brian, Moritur."

One word—"moritur"! There is no pious hint of penitence or absolution, such as usually concludes these announcements. The passionate Queen must have been an old woman, and a weary, in 1028.

That fatal victory at Clontarf so weakened the power of Brian's Munster Kingdom that the O'Brien clan could no longer retain pre-eminence over the Kings of the North and West. The sovereignty again became divided, and war was renewed between the partizans of the various

competitors. Out of these divisions arose, eventually, the well-known quarrels between O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni, and Dermod Macmurrough, Prince of Leinster. There were personal as well as tribal causes for the antagonism between these two. The principal cause was a woman—the best known woman in Irish history. She was Dervorgilla, the daughter of Murtough Mac Floinn, King of Meath. Her story forms a link which connects the days of the Irish Monarchy with those of the Anglo-Norman rule.

CHAPTER VI.

DERVORGILLA.—THE WOMAN OF DESTINY.

No Irishwoman in history is more often mentioned than Dervorgilla, daughter of Murtough Mac Floinn, King of Meath, and false wife of Tiernan O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni. Yet very little is known about this much talked-of princess. Her name is spoken with loathing, but she died in the odour of sanctity. She is compared to Helen of Troy, but we do not even know if she was beautiful. Her life was a long one, and her character must have been complex, yet particulars about her, at other periods of her life than that of her flight with Dermod Mac Murrough, King of Leinster, are not forthcoming. Nor do what particulars there are, which come from two sources—the Irish Annalists, and the Norman historians—always agree. The Irish Annalists say her flight with Dermod took place sixteen years before the Norman invasion. Cambrensis, and the rhyming Anglo-Norman chronicle of that time, give it as the immediate cause of the war by which Dermod was banished, and driven to seek English aid.

Rightly, or wrongly, however, Dervorgilla, is popularly regarded as the cause of the coming of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland. Whatever may have been her story, she, like Gormflaith the Queen, was one of those women of destiny, with whose acts the fate of the Womanland of Eire has been closely bound up.

After the days of Brian Borhumha, the divisions of Leth Mogha and Leth Cuinn, with the alternative succession to the position of Ard-Righ were, no longer strictly observed. The Kings of the North—the O'Neils—and the Kings of the West—the O'Connors—became the principal candidates for High-Kingship, and were constantly at war. Under cover of these great feuds of the powerful houses, the petty feuds of the lesser chieftains were carried on with impunity.

One of the chief supporters of the O'Connors, Kings of the West, was Tiernan O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni—a territory larger than what is to-day Cavan and Leitrim, and which adjoined the O'Connor country. O'Rourke's particular rival was Dermod Mac Murrough, King of Leinster, who was a warm partizan of the Kings of the North, the O'Neils of Ulster. Tiernan and Dermod had long been at enmity, when O'Rourke, already an elderly man, married a wife young enough to be his daughter, the Meath princess, Dervorgilla.

It is said that, before her marriage, Dervorgilla was much attached to the young King of Leinster, whose name was at this time much spread abroad. It had no good sound in men's ears. The young King came of a bad stock. Keating says that his father was buried with a dog, as a mark of contempt and hatred, by the people of Dublin, in consequence of his cruelties. For himself, Dermod "chose rather to be feared than loved. He was rough, though generous, hateful to strangers. He would be against all men, and all men against him." Many stories of cruelty, treachery, and even sacrilege itself, are told of Dermod, but it may be that subsequent events have blackened his character even more than he deserved, and

that he was no worse than many of the turbulent chiefs of his time. We are told that he was handsome, "a man of tall stature, of large and great body, a valiant and bold warrior, and by reason of his constant hallooing his voice was hoarse." At any rate, there was a fascination about this strong, fierce king for Dervorgilla, who was attracted by his boldness and daring, and a secret correspondence was carried on between them. Dervorgilla's marriage—whatever Thomas Moore's song may say—never seems to have been a happy one, nor according to her wishes.

In 1153, in the midst of the feuds between the O'Neils and O'Connors, when Turlough O'Connor was, nominally, High-King, O'Rourke set out to make a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory, on Lough Derg. He previously sent his wife to a place of security in Meath, and left her there, surrounded by his followers. While her husband was performing his penance, Dervorgilla sent a private message to Dermod Mac Murrough, entreating him to rescue her from the husband she hated, and to use any methods, either of stratagem, or force, to carry her away. Her brother, Melaghlin of Meath, was a party to the conspiracy, and aided Dermod.

Dermod received the message with joy. He ordered a small party of horsemen to attend him, and arriving at the place, found the lady ready to receive him. But when Dermod caught her up in his arms, and swung her upon horseback behind one of his officers, Dervorgilla cried out for help and made much ado, so that her servants attempted a rescue, and it was supposed that the lawless and wicked King of Leinster had forced her away against her will, in her husband's absence. It was, however, noticed that Dervorgilla did not forget to bring away with

her the cattle which she had brought to O'Rourke as a dowry.

Upon his return, O'Rourke applied to Turlough O'Connor, both as his over-lord in Connacht, and as Monarch of Ireland, for redress against Dermod. The next year, Turlough marched an army into Leinster, rescued Dervorgilla, placed her under the protection of her own relatives at her father's court in Meath, and extorted conditions from Dermod which considerably crippled his powers of doing mischief. Thus ends the first act of this unhappy drama.

The events of Dervorgilla's after-life, until the final act, are obscure. It seems probable that O'Rourke took her back, for we find mention of their presence together at the consecration of the Abbey of Mellifont, to which she gave gifts, and in which she appears to have been always interested. Yet in the Anglo-Norman histories, it is told that Dervorgilla was with Dermod when he fled to England for help sixteen years later.

In 1156, the Northern O'Neils got the upper hand, and Loughlin O'Neil assumed the crown of Ireland. Naturally, the new Monarch wished to humble the power of the Western O'Connors, and he at once marched into Leinster with a strong army for the purpose of restoring Dermod to the full possession of his province.

Secure in such powerful protection, Dermod now renewed his old feuds with impunity. He not only persecuted and insulted O'Rourke, and the neighbouring chiefs, but provoked the hatred of his own subjects by his tyrannies and cruelties. It may have been that, in the reign of O'Loughlin, Dermod obtained possession of Dervorgilla for the second time. Although no longer young, she may have been still fair.

As the natural consequence of his conduct, Dermod lost allies and friends one by one. Eventually, in 1168, he lost the High-King's protection also, for O'Loughlin died, and Turlough O'Connor's son Roderick—the last King of Ireland—fixed himself upon the throne.

Roderick, although he died a monk in the peace of Cong Abbey, was, in these days, of a fierce and turbulent nature. He lent a willing ear to O'Rourke's demand for vengeance upon Dermod, the enemy who had for so long exalted himself. The forces of Breffni, Meath, and even the Dublin Danes—hitherto Dermod's allies—ranged themselves under one banner with the High-King to make war against the tyrant Dermod. Even Dermod's bosom friend, Murrough O'Brien, one of his own nobles, turned now against his master.

Deserted, Dermod retreated to his capital, Ferns. There, for a time, he hid in the Abbey of St. Mary, which he had endowed. The Norman historians say that he carried with him to Ferns the Lady Dervorgilla. Surrounded by his enemies, Dermod vainly tried to negotiate. He clung to the hope that his beloved Murrough O'Brien might be won back to the old allegiance. Before deserting his last refuge at Ferns, Dermod disguised himself to the feet in the long robe of the Abbot of St. Mary's, and made his way secretly to his friend, in order to persuade him. But Murrough refused to parley with his old master. He only allowed Dermod to return in safety to his refuge.

Disappointed by all in whom he had trusted, with a party too small to make headway against his combined enemies, MacMurrough now escaped secretly from Ferns, and made for the coast. With him were his faithful

friend Olaf O'Kinad, and a number of his retainers. According to popular report, Dervorgilla was with him also.

The whole party sailed over to England with a favouring wind, and landed at Bristol, where Dermod, and Dervorgilla, are said to have lodged at St. Austin's in the house of a rich citizen named Robert Harding, the ancestor of the Fitzhardinges of Berkeley. The exiled King of Leinster thus forced from his territory, determined upon revenge, even at the price of his country and nation.

From England, Dermod went to Acquitaine, and laid his case before Henry II. The King of England received him well, and gave him money, but he was too busy with his own wars in France to do more than give Dermod letters-patent authorizing any of Henry's subjects to assist the King of Leinster at their own risk.

The first subject of consequence attracted by Dermod's offers was the impoverished Earl of Pembroke, Richard "Strong-bow." But Strongbow took two years to make his preparations, and other leaders came before him to Dermod's assistance. There was a party of Welsh Knights under Fitz-stephen, all of whom were descended from the notorious Nesta, the beautiful daughter of Griffith Ap Rees, King of South Wales. Among them were Maurice Fitzgerald, Raymond le Gros, and many more, whose names are interwoven for centuries through the history of this isle of their adoption.

Dermod had previously returned to Ferns. When he heard of the landing of FitzStephen at Bannow Bay near Wexford, he hurried to meet him, with five hundred warriors. Dermod's improved prospects had encouraged many old allies to return to his standard.

The story of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland is too well known to need re-telling. Dermod had promised his daughter Aoife, or Eve, in marriage to Strongbow, and, through her, the succession to his kingdom of Leinster. Such a way of succession was altogether unrecognized among the Irish. Besides, Dermod had a son, who was at this time hostage to the High King for his father's behaviour. The marriage of Strongbow was celebrated among the smoking ruins of Waterford, and Strongbow immediately left his bride, to conquer the rest of Ireland. Backed up by his Norman helpers, and possibly not realizing what the claims, or intentions, of these Normans were, Dermod now over-ran the country with their aid, and even aimed at the High-Kingship for himself. But there were to be no more High-Kings of Ireland. That page was closed. The feuds and dissensions of the native Irish had closed it.

Ard-Righ Roderick O'Connor was alarmed at the doings of the King of Leinster, and warned him that if he did not return to his duty, and send back these English to their own country, he would, forthwith, send him the head of Kavanagh, Dermod's hostage son. Dermod answered disdainfully, and openly declared his pretensions, not only to Roderick's Kingdom of Connacht, but to the throne of Ireland also. Roderick was a fierce, hot-tempered man—so fierce that, once, his own father was obliged to keep him in fetters for a year—and he now retorted by beheading Kavanagh, Dermod's son. Dermod's compact with the English was sealed with his child's blood. Hence the doom said to rest upon Dermod's house, and which seemed curiously fulfilled, for there was no male heir among Dermod's posterity for ever.

In 1171, Dermod again tried to crush his old enemy, Tiernan O'Rourke. But the King of Leinster was twice defeated, and obliged to retreat out of Breffni.

About the end of the same year, "Dermod MacMurrough of Leinster, who had spread terror throughout Ireland, after putting the English in possession of the country, committing excessive evils against the Irish people, and plundering and burning many churches, died, of an uncommon disease. He became putrid while living, through the intervention of Columkille, Finnin, and other Saints of God, for having violated and burned their churches. He died at Ferns [aged 65] without making a will, without penance, without the Eucharist, and without extreme unction, as his evil deeds deserved." This is the account given by the *Four Masters*. They add that "he was rapacious, fierce, vindictive, and of violent passions, although to gain popularity he endeavoured to conciliate the lower classes of the people."

This same year, King Henry II. of England came to Ireland, and received the homage of the Irish princes, as well as of the High-King himself. He held a Court at Cashel, and seems to have won good opinions from the Irish, who probably had little idea of the real meaning of his visit.

Shortly after the King's departure, a quarrel broke out between old Tiernan O'Rourke, and one of Henry II.'s knights, Hugh de Lacy, about the sovereignty of Meath, to which both laid claim. At last a day, and place—Tara itself—were appointed for a pacific meeting between them, that, by means of interpreters, their claims and boundaries might be settled. All came unarmed, except the knights, who kept their swords, and O'Rourke, who

carried his great battle-axe. The scene has been very graphically described, and it is told that Maurice Fitzgerald was warned by a dream of treachery against De Lacy, his friend. Treachery, on one side and the other, was in the air. All at once, there were shouts of a surprise. In the confusion, old O'Rourke struck at De Lacy with his battle-axe, and felled him, and would have despatched him, but for the courage of Maurice Fitzgerald, and the Welsh prince, Griffith, who rode after O'Rourke, who now attempted escape. Griffith "thrust his spear through both O'Rourke, Prince of Breffni, and his horse, and both fell, dead, on the spot."

So came to their end the two men who had desired Dervorgilla.

Dervorgilla's own end was different. It is clear she must have been a rich woman, and that in her own right. In 1158, after her first flight with Dermod, and when she was about fifty, "she gave 60 ounces of gold to the clergy at the consecration of the church at Mellifont. It was a large sum in those days. Brian Borhumha only gave 20 ounces when he visited Armagh Cathedral."

To this splendid Abbey of Mellifont, near Drogheda, which Donough O'Carrol had caused to be built in 1142, Dervorgilla retired. We do not know when. There is no historical mention of her during the stormy and momentous years that followed her flight, whenever, exactly that flight took place. While living at Mellifont, it is recorded that she "built a nunnery at Clonmacnoise, gave a chalice of gold to the Altar of Mary, and cloth for nine altars of the church." In the fair Abbey of Mellifont the final act of Dervorgilla's passionate

and troubled career was played out, in seclusion, and, we may hope, in peace. She lived there many years, and there, in 1193, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters,* Dervorgilla died, at the age of eighty-five. The *Annalists* do not say "after a good penance." It may be that she had less to repent of than later stories represent. We cannot tell, certainly, now. But we can, at least, think of the white-haired, time-worn old sister, in the stately nunnery, year by year drawing nearer to the Spouse Who never fails, and Who never forsakes.

CHAPTER VII.

MARGARET O'CARROL.—" THE BOUNTIFUL."

The mind loves to linger over the gracious picture of Margaret An Einigh—Margaret the Bountiful—which has been drawn for us by one who must have known her well. He was one of the long line of Mac Firbis—the hereditary historians of Lecan—he was Margaret's contemporary, and, no doubt, one of her guests. Margaret O'Carrol was no cloistered votary like St. Brigid, yet she was scarcely less pious. She was no queen like Gormflaith, no passionate princess like Dervorgilla, yet her influence upon the period in which she lived must have been as great, while it was infinitely more beneficent.

The *Annals of the Four Masters* describe Margaret as " the best woman of her time in Ireland."

Margaret's time was somewhat less disturbed than times which went before, and were to follow it. The Anglo-Normans had established themselves as conquerors, but in many cases had already become " More Irish than the Irish." The great Norman families, the Fitzgeralds, Butlers, Burkes, and the rest, had their feuds, but these were not as prolonged as the Wars of the Roses, at this time occupying the English, and keeping them at home in England. In Ireland, this seems to have been a comparatively settled period, and one which saw a great revival of religion, and letters.

Early in the fifteenth century, Margaret O'Carrol, daughter of Tadhg, Lord of Ely, and of the O'Carrols,

was married to Calvagh O'Connor, Lord of Offaly. We first hear of her as his wife, still under her maiden surname (as is even now the custom in parts of Ireland), mending highways, and making bridges, building churches, and providing Mass Books. It is written that she "made most, in her time, of all manner of things profitable to serve God, and her soul."

Having regard to the travelling conditions of her day, perhaps the most remarkable event in Margaret's life—more noteworthy even than the Two Invitations of Margaret, which gave her the name of "the Bountiful"—was her famous pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain, in the year 1445. The name of the principal pilgrims have been recorded, and chief among that "goodlie company of noble and ignoble" we find "the admirable Margaret O'Carrol."

In 1447, two years after the successful accomplishment of this pious journey—the year of a great plague in Ireland—it is recorded that:—"Finola (the White-Shouldered), daughter of Calvagh O'Connor Faly and of his wife Margaret O'Carrol, the widow of O'Donnell, and also of Aedh Biudh (Yellow Hugh) O'Neil, the most beautiful, and stately, the most renowned, and illustrious woman in all Ireland—*her own mother only excepted*—retired from this transitory world to prepare for life eternal, and assumed the yoke of piety and devotion." Finola's preparation lasted five-and-forty years. She died in 1493.

Margaret O'Carrol was a woman of culture and large mind, who loved and appreciated the society of the learned, and desired to do them honour. This is shown by the story of her "Two Invitations." The Mac Firbis

The Invitation of Margaret

historian who records it, or his father, or perhaps both of them, were among her guests.

Mac Firbis writes:—"It was she that twice in one year proclaimed to, and commonly invited . . . all persons, both Irish and Scottish, or rather Albaines, to the general feasts of bestowing both meat and moneys, with all manner of gifts, whereunto gathered to receive these gifts and matter, two thousand and seven hundred persons (besides gamesters and poor men)."

These feasts were held on Lady Day, March 25th, and "Lady Day in Harvest," August 15th, that is, on the Feast of the Annunciation, and of the Assumption. They took place at the two ends of Offaly, at Killeigh, and at Rathangan, respectively. Margaret caused her husband's "chief judge," or brehon, to write out for her "a list of the learned Irish." These she invited and entertained, "clad in a gowne of cloth of gold, with her deerest friends about her, and her clergy, and her judges (brehons), too, Calvagh himself also, on horseback, by the Church's outward side, to the end that all might be done orderly, and each one served successively. And first of all, Margaret gave two chalices of gold as offerings that day on the Altar to God Almighty. She also caused to nurse, or foster, two young orphans. We never heard neither the like of that day, nor comparable to it, in its glory, and solace. And the second day (at Rathangan) was nothing inferior to the first."

Mac Firbis continues his quaint and eulogistic description until he comes to "Anno Domini, 1451, . . . an ungracious and inglorious year to all Learned in Ireland, both phylosophers, poets, guests, strangers, religious persons, soldiers, mendicants, and poor orders,

and to all manner and sorts of poor in Ireland, because of the general support of their maintenance's decease—to wit, Margaret, daughter of Thady O'Carrol, King of Ely, Connor Offaly Calvagh's wife, a woman that never refused any man in the world for anything that she might command, except only her own body. While the world lasts her many gifts to the Irish and Scottish nations cannot be numbered. God's blessing, and the blessing of all saints be on her going to Heaven, and blessed be he that will reade, and will heare this, for the blessing of Margaret's soul. Cursed be the sore in her breast that killed Margaret."

Mac Firbis goes on to add :—

"Felim, son to Calvagh and Margaret aforesaid, the only king's son, that has got most reputation and notable name, and that was most courageous of the Lagenians of later ages, died, and there was but one night betwixt his, and his mother's death. He died of the leprosy."

In 1471, Margaret's second son, Teigue, died of plague, and none of her three children appears to have left posterity. Calvagh himself died seven years after his wife.

This glimpse, through the mists of more than five hundred years, is a very intimate one. We can visualize the bountiful lady in her golden gown. We can realize her as one full of practical usefulness and initiative, generous and appreciative, refined and virtuous.

Thomas D'Arcy Magee has written some charming verses in praise of Margaret, and in description of her famous Feast.

". . . . . Margaret, like our Lady's Self,
. . . . . unto the troubled land
Brings quiet in her holy smile, and healing in her hand.
It is not that her father is renowned through Innisfail; [Erin]
It is not that her lord is hailed sentinel of the Gael;
It is not that her daughter is the wife of the O'Neil;
It is not that her first-born's name strikes terror thro' the vale;
It is not for all her riches, but her virtues that I praise.
She made the bardic spirit strong to face the evil days.
To the princes of a feudal age she taught the might of love,
And her name, though woman's, shall be scrolled their warrior names above."

"Low lie the oaks of Offaly, Rath Imayn is a wreck,
Fallen are the chiefs of Offaly—Death's yoke on every neck.
Da Sinchel's Feast no more is held for holy in the land.
No Queen, like Margaret, welcomes now the drooping bardic band,
No nights of minstrelsy are now like Irish nights of old,
No septs of singers such as then McEgan's book enrolled.
But the name of Margaret Carrol, who taught the might of love,
Shall shine in Ireland's annals even minstrels' names above."

CHAPTER VIII.

MARGARET FITZGERALD.—COUNTESS OF ORMONDE AND OSSORY.

"The Countess," or "Mageen," as she is still called in Kilkenny—the city of her adoption—was the most remarkable woman of her age. "She was so great that all estates in Ireland bowed to her, and so wise that every important question was submitted to her judgment." But even had Margaret Fitzgerald, wife of Pierce Butler, "the Red-haired," eighth Earl of Ormonde, been a lesser woman, her position, as a link between those two great hereditary rivals, the Geraldines, and the Butlers, would have marked her for consideration in any description of remarkable Irishwomen. Before telling Margaret's story, it is necessary to describe the great House to which Margaret belonged, and the great rival House which she entered on her marriage.

The Geraldines traced their descent from Norman Knights, some of whom settled in Italy, and became Dukes of Tuscany. A descendant of one of these Tuscan Dukes —Otho by name—came to England, either from Florence, or Normandy, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and became a great baron at the Confessor's Court. After the Norman Conquest, William I. made this Otho Castellan of Windsor Castle, and Warden of his Berkshire forests. From this Otho's grandson, Gerald, the Fitzgeralds take their name.

Henry I. gave this Gerald large grants of land, and

since he was a valiant Knight and leader, the King sent him into Wales to subdue the Welsh princes. In reward, Gerald was given further grants of Welsh land, and made Governor of Pembrokeshire, and Constable of Pembroke Castle. Gerald then married Nesta, the daughter of Rees-ap-Griffith, Prince of Wales. They had three sons —Maurice, William, and David. William's son was the famous Raymond Le Gros—"the Fat"—who came over to Ireland, in 1169, with Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, whose right-hand, and son-in-law he became.

Gerald's son, Maurice, came over to Ireland with Fitzstephen, and in 1173 Henry II. appointed him Chief Governor of Ireland—an office which his descendants were destined to fill many times in the succeeding generations. Holingshed thus describes Maurice, the first of the Irish Geraldines :—"A man he was both honest and wise, and for truth and valour very noble and famous, a man of his word, of constant mind, and of a certain bashfulness, well-coloured, and of good countenance, of middle stature, and compact at all points, courteous, gentle, and moderate, a pattern of sobriety and good behaviour, a man of few words, more wisdom had he than eloquence, in martial affairs bold, stout and valiant, and yet not hasty to run into any adventure, but, when an attempt was once taken in hand, he would strictly pursue and follow the same." This fine, plain Norman Knight obtained great grants of land in Leinster and Munster. He died in 1177. From him descended the Earls of Kildare, and of Desmond, the Barons of Naas and Offaly, and the Dukes of Leinster to the present day.

The Geraldines speedily became "more Irish than the Irish." "Their story is a romance more thrilling than

any creation of fiction. From the earliest period of their settlement in Ireland, they attained to a position of almost kingly power, and for full five hundred years they were the foremost figures of Anglo-Irish history." They were lords of the central, and richest, pasture land of Ireland. They were strong in castles, and in the valour and devotion of their clan, and connections, whether of Geraldine blood, or partaking of it through female descent. Nearly all the Irish chieftains ranged under their banner, and rose at their *slogan*. Until their temporary fall in Elizabeth's days, the Earls of Kildare held much the position of the ancient Ard-Righ of Tara, whose sovereignity was over the same fertile central plain of Erin.

The head of the Geraldines in the sixteenth century was Garret Mor, "the Great Earl" of Kildare. This eighth Earl wrote to his kinsman the Gherardini of Florence in 1507 that "Our house in Ireland has increased beyond measure, in a multitude of barons, knights and noble persons, holding many possessions, and having under their command many persons." Gerald Mor lived, chiefly, at his Castle of Maynooth, in the great central plain. He had also a town house in Dublin, and the first fire-arms ever seen in Ireland were the muskets carried by the sentries who guarded the Earl's Dublin residence.

This "Great Earl" is described as "a mighty man, full of honour and courage, soon hot, soon cold, somewhat headlong and unruly to the nobles whom he fancied not." The *Four Masters* in their *Annals* add that he was "valorous and merciful, and religious in his words and judgments"—but not always in his deeds, it would seem, since he burnt Cashel Cathedral! Such was the father

of Margaret Fitzgerald. Later descriptions of his daughter's character re-echo this description of her famous father.

Margaret's mother was Gerald Mor's first wife, a lady of Norman-Irish descent, Alison, co-heiress of Sir Rowland Eustace, Lord Porchester. She died, during her second daughter Margaret's girlhood, in 1494, of agitation and grief, it is said, over her husband's imprisonment in the Tower of London, although this imprisonment was not of long duration, since "the Great Earl" was too powerful to be crushed, even by the English sovereign, much less by the machinations of his rivals, the Butlers.

The Butlers were the great rivals of the Fitzgeralds. They, too, were descended from a Norman Knight—one Fitzwalter, who came first to England with William the Conqueror. When Henry II. came over to Ireland in 1171 to regulate Irish affairs, he brought with him, in his train, Theobald Fitzwalter, one of his nobles. Theobald was kin to murdered Thomas à Becket, and it was part of the King's penance to ennoble the late Archbishop's connections. Accordingly, Henry II. gave Theobald Fitzwalter large grants of Irish land, and conferred on him the office of Chief Butler, his duty being to present the Kings of England with their first cup of wine after their Coronation. From this office—the Butler-ship of Ireland—Fitzwalter's descendants took their name. Later, they became Earls of Ormonde, and of Ossory, and branches of the family became Lords of Cahir, and of Thurles.

The Butlers grew powerful in Ireland, and from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the family held the

principal great offices of Ireland. They were ever prudent, cautious, and inclined to peace, and, as a rule, they were loyal to the English sovereign, to whom they owed their lands. Their interests were bound up with those of the English Pale, and they identified themselves less with the native Irish than did the Fitzgeralds.

The Butler lands were, mostly, in Munster, chiefly about Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary, and Waterford. Between them, and the fortified English Pale round Dublin, lay Leinster, and the Fitzgerald's country. Small wonder then that there should be constant conflict and rivalry between the two houses. In any quarrel, if the Butlers were upon the one side, the Geraldines were certain to be found upon the other.

The English Wars of the Roses were echoed in Ireland. The Fitzgeralds wore the White Rose of the House of York, and, inevitably the Butlers adopted the Red Rose of the House of Lancaster. As the fortunes of Yorkists, or Lancastrians, rose, or fell, across the Channel, so the Irish Lord Deputy was a Fitzgerald, or a Butler.

In England, the Wars of the Roses were ended by the marriage of Henry Tudor—Henry VII.—with Elizabeth of York, but they were not so ended in Ireland. Henry VII. shrewdly realized the strength of the Yorkists, who were headed by Garret Mor, eighth Earl of Kildare. Therefore, although he took the Butler family—his partizans—into favour, he confirmed the Earl of Kildare in his office of Lord Deputy, or viceroy. There was none in Ireland to curb the pride of "the Great Earl," for the Butler Earl of Ormonde had left Ireland for the time.

Henry VII. was none too secure upon his throne. His jealousies of Yorkists, and his coolness to his Queen, gave

great dissatisfaction to his subjects, and the imposture of Lambert Simnel was the outcome. This young man claimed to be the rightful heir to the English Throne, and son of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, who was Dublin-born, and beloved by the Irish. The Irish welcomed Simnel. The Earl of Kildare received him as his sovereign, surrounded him with the pomp of royalty, and solemnly crowned him himself in the Cathedral in Dublin, with a diadem taken from the statue of Our Lady.

The belief in Simnel was not universal in Ireland. The Butler family opposed him. When, therefore, the Earl of Kildare was deprived of his high offices for his part in Simnel's insurrection, these fell to the Butlers, and their partizans. The result was civil war—even in the streets of Dublin.

A curious relic of these stormy feuds may be seen in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, to-day. A reconciliation was at last proposed between the Earls of Kildare and Ormonde, and the two great nobles agreed to meet in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and make peace. Both arrived with their bands of retainers and friends. The Geraldines were the most numerous, and James, Earl of Ormonde, fearing treachery, barred himself up in the Chapter House, and refused to open the door. In the deadlock, it was suggested that an opening should be cut in the thick oak portal, through which the rivals might shake hands. This was done, but Ormonde still held back. Then the "Great Earl" of Kildare thrust in his right hand, and by his hearty handshake and good-will, gave such confidence to his over-cautious foe that the reconciliation was accomplished. The door, with its square hole, is still preserved in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

This James Butler was not the rightful Earl of Ormonde. The old Earl of Ormonde died, when on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in 1477, leaving only two daughters. The eldest of these two daughters married an English Knight, Sir Thomas Boleyn, who was, subsequently, the father of Anne Boleyn, the unfortunate Queen of Henry VIII. Sir Thomas Boleyn assumed the title of Earl of Ormonde in right of his wife, but, by Irish law, the Earldom of Ormonde went to the next male heir, Pierce Ruadh Butler. In 1477, Pierce was absent from Ireland, being on the King's business in France. Sir James Butler—who was a natural son of the old Earl of Ormonde—accordingly seized upon the estates, rights, and title of the Earl of Ormonde, in Pierce's absence, and was for a time acknowledged as Earl in Ireland.

The reconciliation in St. Patrick's was of brief duration. James Butler was soon busy with secret accusations against the Lord Deputy Kildare at the Court of Henry VII. Perhaps Butler was not a little confounded when the English King commanded Gerald Mor to appear before him in person. The Earl of Kildare was summoned to London, and sent to the Tower. This sudden summons, and his imprisonment, is said to have been the death of Margaret's mother.

When Gerald Mor appeared before Henry VII. the King advised him to provide himself with able Counsel to refute his enemies' charges. "Yea!" replied Kildare, grasping the King by the hand. "I choose the ablest in the land—I take your Highness to be my Counsel against these false knaves!"

Henry VII. was pleased at Kildare's compliment to his powers of discernment and equity, and acted as Counsel,

finding the charges against the Earl to be frivolous and vexatious, until the accusers brought forward the charge that, in the Barons' Wars in Munster, in 1495, Kildare, who hated David Creaghe, Archbishop of Cashel, had sacrilegiously burned down the Cathedral on the Rock of Cashel.

"Spare your evidence!" cried Kildare, "I did burn it, but never would I have done it but that I was sure the Archbishop had been inside it!"

His justification amused the King, and the blunt and fearless soldier was evidently finding favour with his Sovereign. Driven to angry despair, Kildare's accusers declared that—"All Ireland cannot govern the Earl of Kildare!" "Then," answered the King, "Let the Earl of Kildare govern all Ireland!" Forthwith he reinstated him as Lord Deputy, realizing doubtless, that this was the most economical way of governing his unruly dependency. For Henry VII. was ever a miser, and revolts were costly affairs.

Restored to royal favour, Kildare returned to Ireland, in August, 1496, as Lord Deputy again, and proceeded to repress the rebellion of those clans who favoured the impostor Perkin Warbeck. Gerald Mor was now the King's man. His policy was changed. Henceforth, his plan was to conciliate, or to divide, his enemies.

To further this new policy, and to strengthen his position, Gerald endeavoured to restore harmony between the houses of Fitzgerald and Butler by means of a matrimonial alliance.

Pierce the Red had now returned to Ireland, and entered into a fierce struggle with James Butler for the Earldom of Ormonde, and the Chieftainship of the Butlers.

But James was too many for Pierce, and the rightful heir was reduced to concealment and direst poverty. It was at this juncture that the Earl of Kildare decided to marry his second motherless daughter, Margaret, to Pierce Butler, and to support his claim against James the Usurper.

Things continued to go badly with Pierce even after his marriage. Both he and his wife were reduced to the sorest straits, and it would seem as if Pierce had altogether lost heart. It was a complaint wrung from his young wife by the hardships of her condition that goaded Pierce into the final adventure in which he killed James Butler, and regained his rightful position. The account is given here in its old spelling :

"Great and manifold were the miseries that the Lady Margaret sustained, her husband, Piers Butler being soe eagerly pursued by the Usurper as he durst not beare up head, but was forced to hover and lurke in woods and forrests. The noble woman, being greate with child, and upon necessity constrained to use a spare diet (for her onlie sustenance was milke) longed sore for wine. Calling her lorde, and a trustie servant of his, James White, unto her, she requested them both to help her to some wine, for she was not anie longer able to endure so strict a life. 'Truly, Margaret,' quote the Earle of Osserie, 'Thou shalt have store of wine within this foure and twenty hours, or else thou shall feed alone on milk for me!" The next day following, Piers, hearing intelligence that his enimiee the base Butler would have travelled from Donmore to Kilkennie, notwithstanding that he was accompanied with six horsemen, yet Piers, having none but his lackie, did forestall him in the waie, and, with a

courageous charge, gored the base Butler through with his spear."

Pierce the Red now became head of the Butlers, but since Sir Thomas Boleyn still called himself the Earl of Ormonde, Margaret's husband was usually known as the Earl of Ossory. In time, Sir Thomas Boleyn exchanged his empty title for an English one, and Pierce was then called Earl of Ormonde and Ossory.

Margaret was a woman of great stature, masculine in appearance, and vigorous in mind and body. This story of her early married life, which has just been told, illustrates a later description of her by the Jesuit Campion, who says she was "a rare woman, and able for wisdom to rule a realm, had not her stomach over-ruled herself." Pierce was considerably older than his Geraldine wife, and is described as "a man of great honour and sincerity, and infinitely good-natured." It is evident that Margaret ruled him from the beginning, for, before long, we hear that she "emulated—if not excelled—her lord in feats of arms, having always a numerous train of armed followers, well-trained and accoutered, at her command, by whose aid she levied blackmail on her less powerful neighbours." In the Castle of Ballyragget, in Co. Kilkenny, which was one of her favourite Castles, a stone seat, called her "Chair," is still shown on the top of the tower, and also a jutting stone, from which, it is said, she was wont to hang her prisoners. Indeed—to quote the Rev. James Graves, in his *History of Kilkenny Cathedral*—"In the traditions of the peasantry of Kilkenny her husband's existence is utterly forgotten, but his Consort stands vividly forth as 'The' Countess, forming with 'Cromwell,' and 'The Danes' a triad, to whom almost

everything marvellous, cunning, or cruel is attributed. She is the traditional builder—as Cromwell is the traditional destroyer—of nearly every castle in the district."

The Countess Margaret was, however, much more than a castle-builder, and raider. She was a liberal patron of arts, and of handicrafts, and brought artificers from Flanders to instruct the people of Kilkenny in weaving and tapestry making. She left her mark upon the city of Kilkenny in a definite and practical way, and built a school "near the Church yarde of St. Kennyes," which remained, like the industries and handicrafts which she introduced and supported, as boons to Kilkenny for long years after Margaret's death. Even to-day "the little city" of Kilkenny compares very favourably with many a larger.

Margaret became the mother of nine children, three sons, and six daughters. Her marriage seems to have been a happy one, for she was known as her husband's "help mete," and right-hand, during his life. Her marriage—which was arranged to cement a truce between the rival houses—failed in its primary object, for her father, the "Great Earl," and her husband were soon at enmity again. Garret Mor died in 1513, on September 3rd, at Kildare, when upon an expedition against the O'Carrols, but his son Garret Oge—Gerald the Younger —the ninth Earl of Kildare, carried on the enmity throughout his life.

Henry VIII. succeeded to the English throne, and he confirmed Gerald the Younger in his father's estates, and appointed him as his successor in the office of Lord Deputy. At first, he was on good terms with his brother-in-law Pierce, who aided him to avenge his father

upon the O'Carrols. But soon Gerald Oge threw himself eagerly into the feuds of the Desmond branch of the Geraldines. He conducted the government of Ireland, more as a great Irish Chieftain than as a Deputy of the English Crown. His close connection with the Irish chiefs, and with their feuds, and his family alliances with them—which will be again alluded to—gave great offence at the English Court. Cardinal Wolsey—ever a bitter enemy of the Geraldines—was now rising to power. In 1519, Gerald Oge was summoned to London to justify his conduct. This he succeeded in doing, as well as in winning, for his second wife, a cousin of King Henry VIII., the Lady Elizabeth Grey, a daughter of the Marquis of Dorset. But Gerald was not re-appointed Lord Deputy. This office was given to the Earl of Surrey, and the shadow began to fall upon the great House of Fitzgerald. For the next seventeen years, Gerald was constantly occupied with feuds in Ireland, and was bitterly opposed to the heads of the Butler House, his brother-in-law, Pierce, and his nephew, James, Pierce's eldest son.

Lord Deputy Surrey, in his letters to Henry VIII., and Wolsey, constantly urged the loyal services to the Crown of Pierce, claimant to the Earldom of Ormonde. By Surrey's advice, Henry VIII. appointed Pierce as Surrey's successor in the office of Lord Deputy, and restored to him his title of Ormonde. Pierce took the oaths of office in Dublin on March 26th, 1522, and three days afterwards, returned to Kilkenny to keep Easter with his family.

At the end of the same year Gerald Oge returned to Ireland, and, from the day of his arrival, strove to remove his brother-in-law from the government of Ireland. Even

his wife Elizabeth intrigued with Wolsey for Ormonde's downfall, while Gerald stirred up the Irish chiefs against him.

No doubt it was her brother's opposition to her husband's claim to the Ormonde title which lay at the root of Margaret's antagonism towards Gerald. Her violent opposition to Kildare, at this time, is remarkable. She took a definite stand against his policy. Possibly her clear judgment and "singular wisdome," showed her the probable end of her brother's course of action. She dreaded the downfall of his great House which was drawing nigh. Margaret was ever a builder and organizer, and she prized the order, and peaceful progress, which was only possible in an Eirinn which was calm and settled, instead of torn by tribal feuds. The story of the downfall of the Geraldines may be told here, before returning to the home life of Margaret and her husband.

The enmity between the Geraldines and the Butlers increased. In 1528, Surrey, now Duke of Norfolk, wrote to Cardinal Wolsey that:—"The malice between the Earls of Kildare and Ossorie, is, in my opinion, the only cause of the ruin of this poor land." After the fall of his enemy Cardinal Wolsey, Gerald Oge became even more arrogant and independent. He induced Henry VIII. to re-appoint him Lord Deputy in 1532, and he put his own nominees into all the great offices of the state. There was one exception. Henry VIII. gave the office of Lord Treasurer to Margaret's eldest son, James Butler, who had by this time reached manhood, and had stepped into the place of his father—now elderly, and much incapacitated by gout—as head of the Butlers.

Re-established in office, Kildare renewed his feuds with

the Irish tribes, and went to war again with his old foes, the O'Carrols. While besieging their castle of Birr, he received a musket shot under his ribs. It was in the following spring that the ball worked its way out on the other side of his body, thus relieving the Earl of horrible suffering. But he never entirely recovered, and the irritation set up by this accident increased the natural violence of his temper, and perhaps led to the imprudent actions which caused his downfall.

Endless complaints of Kildare's conduct now reached a King growing capricious, violent, and uncertain. The Earl of Desmond, Gerald's kinsman, formed a league with the King of France for the invasion of Ireland, and the overthrow of the English rule there. There were enemies in plenty to suggest that the Earl of Kildare was also connected with this league. Kildare was commanded to suppress the Desmond rising, and to capture the Earl of Desmond. Failing to do this, he was accused of conniving at Desmond's escape, and, for a second time, he was summoned to London to answer to the King.

Kildare must have had a premonition of what was in store. He hesitated, pleaded ill-health, and sent his wife to again exercise her influence. The hand of his enemies may be traced in a letter written by Pierce Butler at this time to Henry's Minister, Thomas Cromwell :—"Men think here that all the parchement and wax in England will not bring Kildare thither again." But Gerald dare tarry no longer, with a heavy heart he left for London in February, 1534. The Earl of Ossory went to Court also. The Geraldine was never to return.

Kildare was foolish enough to confide the difficult office of Lord Deputy during his absence to his eldest son,

"Silken Thomas"—so called from the splendour of his dress and retinue, and his persuasive speech—who was but a boy of twenty-one. Kildare was imprisoned in the Tower to await his trial, and rumours were circulated in Ireland that he had been murdered there by the King's orders. Some say that they were circulated by Kildare's enemies, who desired to drive his family into rebellion and ruin. Others maintain that the Earl left behind him plots to raise such difficulties in Ireland as should compel the King to restore him, or, if not, to avenge his detention. Whoever laid the train, it was fired by the impetuous passion of "Silken Thomas," who rushed into a rebellion the details of which will be told in the story of his Aunt, Eleanor Fitzgerald. "Silken Thomas's" rebellion was a failure, and the Butlers drove the rebels into the wilds of Munster and Connacht, where they were in grievous straits. "Silken Thomas" was induced, by false promises, to surrender, and he and his five uncles were brought prisoners to London, and there all were beheaded as traitors on February 3rd, 1536. But before he paid the extreme penalty for his impetuous revolt, "Silken Thomas"—whether he knew it or not—was tenth Earl of Kildare, for Gerald Oge had died in the Tower, from a broken heart even more than from broken health. The great House of the Kildare Fitzgeralds had fallen.

Pierce the Red did not long survive his rival, for he died at Kilkenny on the 21st of August, 1539. A graphic picture of Pierce and Margaret is given in a letter written some years after the death of both—in 1616—by Robert Rothe, which is still preserved in the British Museum :—

"The said Sir Pierce Butler, Earle of Ormonde and Ossorie, in all the course of his life was very religious and

godly, and (as I have heard by an ancient man that lived in his time) he used, every year, in the last fortnight of Lent, to retire himself from all wordly business, and to lye, during that time, in a chamber neere St. Kennyes Church of Kilkenny called 'Paradise,' and there he used his daily prayers, and gave almes to the poor, and prepared himself to receive the Blessed Sacrament, and upon Easter Eve, in the evening, he returned to his dwelling-house.

"He was married to the Lady Margaret, daughter to the Earl of Kildare, with whom he lived many years in great honour and prosperitie. The said Earle and Countess planted great civilitie in the counties of Tipperary and Kilkenny, and to give good example to all the people of those counties, they brought out of Flanders, and other countries, divers artificers, who were dayly kept at work by them in their Castle of Kilkenny, where they wrought, and made diaper, tapestry, turkey carpetts, cushins, and like other works, where of some doe remayne, as yet, with the now Earle of Ormonde.

"The said Earle was a most honourable, playne, and kinde gentleman, loving, familiar, and liberall to his friends and followers, and a scurge and enemy to all bad people. He was a most worthy subject, and did many great and acceptable services to the Crowne of England, in his time, and died in the favour of his Prince, and in the love of his friends and followers, on the 21st of August in anno 1539, and was buried at St. Kennyes Church aforesaid, in a monument made for him in the Chancell of the said Church.

"The said Lady Margaret, Countess of Ormonde and Ossory, lived some years after him, and during that small

remain of her life, she lived most godly, in contemplation and prayer, giving almes bountifully to poore and needy people, and at her proper costes and charges built a schoole house near the church yarde of St. Kennyes Church aforesaid.

"The said Sir Pierce Butler, Earl of Ormonde, and Ossorie, was twice Lord Deputy of Ireland, vizt. in the 13th yeare of the raigne of King Henry VIII., as is before remembered, and afterwards in the 19th yeare of the said King, upon the removing of the Lord Baron of Delvin (then Lord Deputy) whoe was by treachery apprehended by O'Connor. The said Earle (as Richard Stanihurst in his book of the description of Ireland doth write) was, of himself, a plaine and simple gentleman (saving in feats of armes) and yet, nevertheless, he bare out his honours, and the charge of his government very worthily, through the singular wisedoms of his Countess, a lady of such porte that all estates in the realme crouched unto her, soe pollitique that nothing was thought substancially debated without her advice. She was man-like, and tall of stature, very liberall and bountifull, a sure friend, a bitter enemy, hardly disliking where she fancied, not easily fancying where she disliked. She was a good helpe and means, in those days, whereby her husband's countries were brought to civilitie."

Countess Margaret seems to live again before us in Robert Rothe's old letter. Her memory still lingers in "the little city" where she lived much, and is buried. It is noteworthy that, according to later chronicles, Kilkenny was "of all Ireland the part most reclaimed from sluttishness and slovenry to civility, and clean bedding."

Margaret only survived her husband for three years, but during that time she was politically active, as well as given to prayer and good works. Letters of hers to Henry VIII., and to various persons connected with the English Government, are still preserved among the State Papers. There is a curious letter of hers, written July 8th, 1540, and sent, with a present of Irish hawks—then held in great esteem—to Henry VIII.

"Pleas it your Mooste Excellent Highness to be advertised that lyke as my Lord, my husband, whose sowle Jhesu rest, at times delyted to provyde suche pleasures in this land as sholde be acceptable to Your Majestie, soe, in semblance wise, do I recongnis my self moche boundyn to declare my hart and duetie towards Your Grace of like sorte and dispocission. And having sent unto Your Highness, by this berrer, two goshawks, to be delyverid unto Your Majestie as of my pore gifts, for lack of any convenient thing, at this time, being in my dispocission to be presented to Your Grace: in mooste humble wise I beseche Your Highness to accept the same in goode parte. And thus the Blissid Trinitie preserve your mooste Royall Person long and tryumphauntly to reigne with mooche voctory.

"Written at Your Highness Citie of Waterford the 8th of July.

"Your Grace's mooste humble bounden Subject,

"M. of Ormond and Oss."

Did Margaret foresee that sad days were on their way for the House of Ormonde, in its turn? She did not live to see them, but in 1548, six years after her death, her eldest son, James, Earl of Ormonde, was suspected of

hostility to the English Crown, was summoned to England, and, on October 28th, was poisoned at a supper at Ely House. James, like his father, married a Fitzgerald, the daughter and heiress of the eleventh Earl of Desmond. Their son Thomas was brought up in the English Court, and was a prominent—and curiously interesting—figure in Irish history in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. He was known as "Black Tom of Carrick" —where he built himself a lordly house—and as "the Queen's Black Husband" from Elizabeth's partiality. He was a "dark" man in many ways, and learnt his state-craft in a stern school. "Black Tom" was but ten years old when his grandmother, the Countess Margaret, died.

Lord Deputy St. Leger announced the death of the Dowager Countess of Ormonde in a letter to the King dated August 27th, 1542. She was buried in the fair Cathedral of St. Canice in Kilkenny, in the fine tomb which she had erected over "Peter Butler, and prepared also for herself." The two figures lay side by side in sculptured stone until, in later centuries, an injudicious restorer separated them. This mistake has been rectified by the late Marquis of Ormonde, who has caused "the Red Earl" and his Countess to be re-united. One of her daughters sleeps beside the Countess.

A personality strong and uncompromising as the Countess Margaret's, no doubt made many enemies, and we are told that she was a good hater. It is also recorded that "to her many virtues was yoked a self-liking, and a majesty above the tenure of a subject." From this it may be gathered that for all her devotion to her husband, and his house, and her enmity to her brother Kildare,

Margaret remained a true Geraldine, and a true daughter of the proud "Great Earl." There is an attraction about Margaret, for all her foibles, her masculinity and her greediness, which grows upon the student of this remarkable woman's character. This big Irishwoman had a big heart, as well as a big brain, in that big body of hers. She was "a sure friend, very liberall and bountifull," and for all her prejudices, her outlook on life was "man-like" in its breadth, its soundness, and its reasonableness. She was a good wife, and "helpe," for Stanihurst would lead us to believe that her husband's successful career was entirely owing to her "wisedom." The stories of her hangings and raidings have been, no doubt, magnified by re-telling, but there is about even these a largeness which betokens no ordinary woman. "Great" is perhaps the most fitting word by which to describe the daughter of Garret Mor.

CHAPTER IX.

LADY ELEANOR FITZGERALD.—WIFE OF THE MacCARTHY REAGH.

The life of Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald was one very different to that of her sister Margaret, Countess of Ormonde and Ossory. Much less is known about her, and her lines fell in different places. Margaret Fitzgerald made her husband; she spurred him on to action when he was supine; she influenced him throughout life by her sound judgment and wisdom. Equally, her Butler marriage seems to have made her. It coloured her opinions, it widened her outlook. No less Irish than her sister, she threw her influence into the scale on the side of loyalty to the State—in which her husband and sons bore their part—and of law, order, and regularity. With Eleanor, it was otherwise.

Eleanor was the eldest daughter of Garret Mor, the "Great Earl" of Kildare. Her mother was his first wife, Alison, daughter, and heiress, of Sir Rowland Eustace, afterwards Lord Porchester. Eleanor was the eldest of a long family. Margaret came next in age, and four other daughters followed in succession before the birth of the Earl's eldest son, Gerald Oge. Alison died in 1494, and Garret Mor married again. He had seven sons by his second wife.

Doubtless the two elder girls were close companions during their childhood, and early girlhood, although they were severed by the circumstances of their later lives,

but we hear very little about those early days. Margaret, as we know, was married, shortly after her mother's death, for political reasons, to Pierce Butler. It is likely that before this—in those days when men declared that "All Ireland cannot rule the Earl of Kildare!"—his eldest girl had been given by the "Great Earl" to be the bride of the MacCarthy Reagh of Carberry. Garret Mor was an Irish chieftain first, an English noble afterwards. He ordered the matrimonial affairs of his household as he willed, careless of English opinion, and the statute of Kilkenny, before the days when Henry VII. summoned him to England, at the instigation of the Butlers, to give an account of his deeds. At that period of his career, he cared more for the clans than he did for the Pale. The MacCarthys were powerful in the South, and no doubt the head of one of the branches of the family —The MacCarthy Reagh—was regarded by Gerald as a fitting match for a Fitzgerald. Accordingly, Eleanor departed to the rude, and comparatively primitive, state of a native Irish chieftain's court. Margaret, in her turn, went to hardship, and conflict in the woods, and secret hiding-places of the Butler's country, until her husband was restored to his title.

Probably, Eleanor's marriage was as much a matter of policy as was Margaret's. The Fitzgeralds were ever in sympathy with the great Irish families, and closely connected with them. Indeed, one of the chief charges that Pierce Butler brought later—in 1525—against Gerald "the Younger," was that he connected himself with "the Irish enemy" by the marriages of his family. Eleanor's brother chose for his closest friends O'Brien of Thomond, and Con O'Neil—who bore the Sword of State before him

when was Lord Deputy—and he married his daughter to O'Carrol, a sometime enemy, thus carrying on the tradition of his father, the "Great Earl."

We may picture Eleanor as resembling her father Gerald Mor in appearance, and as transmitting her looks to her son, because of the following little incident described by Ap Parry, one of Lord Leonard Grey's captains, in a letter to Thomas Cromwell. It was in later times—in 1535—when this son had succeeded his father, and was The MacCarthy Reagh in his turn.

"At Cork the young Lord Barry waited on Lord James Butler" [the son of Margaret Fitzgerald, and also Lady Eleanor's nephew], "and made complaint against MacCarthy Reagh, the nephew of the late Earl of Kildare by his sister Eleanor. He said that MacCarthy withheld from him a great part of his inheritance."

MacCarthy Reagh, who had come upon a safe conduct, made answer with all the haughty pride of the two families—Irish and English—from which he derived his blood, that he would not be sworn to the King, nor give any man pledges to do any man right to whom he might have done a wrong. "For"—he said scornfully—"that which he had won with his sword he would keep with his sword." The Lord Butler, moved at what he considered the insolent language of the Irish Chieftain [his first cousin] retorted angrily—"That it should be to his pain," to which MacCarthy made answer "that he would abide it," with a proud countenance"—adds Ap Parry—"and as like the Geraldines as ever I saw!"

The two chiefs of the MacCarthys—the husband of Eleanor, and Cormac Oge MacCarthy, whose daughter was married to a Desmond Chief—were the sworn friends

and allies of the Desmond Geraldines, and were constantly in arms on their behalf. As they were sworn enemies of the Butlers, we may conclude that the two sisters, Margaret and Eleanor, saw little of each other during their married lives. Indeed, in 1520, the Earl of Ormonde was at war with the MacCarthys, and the Desmonds, and heavily defeated them, to the great satisfaction of Surrey, then Lord Deputy. After the battle, Surrey treated with the two MacCarthys at Waterford for the restoration of peace and good government within their borders. Surrey describes them to Cardinal Wolsey as "two wise men, and more conformable to good order than some Englishmen here."

It is only from such little contemporary touches here and there in letters that we get intimate glimpses of Lady Eleanor's husband, children, and circumstances. But we can picture these, and be sure that they were essentially different to those of the Butlers, or even the Fitzgeralds of Ormonde. Eleanor steps into the history of her time after the ill-fated rebellion of her nephew, "Silken Thomas," when she was a middle-aged, if not elderly woman.

Disorders and disaffections had much increased in 1533. There were rumours of Desmond treaties with the French King against English rule, and charges were brought against the Earl of Kildare—chiefly by his enemies and rivals, the Butlers—of the abuse of his office as Lord Deputy. Kildare was summoned to London to give an account of his doings. After much hesitation, he went in the February of the next year.

Before he left Ireland, Gerald Oge was foolish enough to appoint his son "Silken Thomas"—of the splendid

raiment—as Vice-Deputy in his place. "Silken Thomas" was young—only twenty-one—wilful, and "ordered by light counsel"—the counsel, that is, of his five Fitzgerald uncles, and the FitzEustaces. It was soon evident that the boy's sympathies were entirely with those who were conspiring and plotting against the English Government. He also made many enemies, by his slights, rather than by any oppression.

While "Silken Thomas" was on the full tide of his career as Vice-Deputy, a rumour spread in Dublin that Gerald, his father, had been put to death in the Tower. Possibly, the rumour was started by the Butlers for their own ends, but it seemed likely enough to be true. The young man rushed to St. Mary's Abbey (now Christ Church Cathedral) where the Council, according to appointment, awaited his coming. He was followed by his native Irish partizans, seething with excitement. In the Council he threw off the sword of State, and renounced his allegiance to the English Monarch, saying he would now draw his own sword in the defence of his family.

The Lord Chancellor, Archbishop Cromer, to whom he handed over the sword, kindly took him by the wrists, and implored him, even with tears, to at least assure himself of the truth of the rumour of his father's death before he brought ruin upon himself and upon his house. Perhaps the venerable Archbishop, who was a friend of the Geraldines, might have prevailed, but the Irish followers of the young Deputy, who did not understand what the Chancellor was saying in English, grew impatient at his long and eager speech, and a harper—"Silken Thomas's" household bard—struck up a strain of martial music, and summoned "Silken Thomas" by the memories of the

past to linger no longer, but to go forth to his great destinies. The inflammable material was fired. Casting off sword and robes of State, the Vice-Deputy of the English King was at once the leader of a wild body of violent insurgents.

The rest is a sad tale. "Silken Thomas," and his unruly band of adherents, laid siege to Dublin, they opened communication with the Emperor Charles V., and with the Pope, against England, and, finally, they cruelly murdered the Archbishop of Dublin, who withstood them.

This act was highly injurious to the Geraldine cause. The murder of a high ecclesiastic produced a fearful sensation among the populace. "Silken Thomas" was excommunicated. It is said that the news of his son's excommunication, when brought to him in his captivity in the Tower, broke Gerald Oge's heart. But it is quite possible that precise news of his son's doings never reached the Earl of Kildare at all, for certainly "Silken Thomas" was not at once acquainted with his father's death, which was due to natural causes, and took place in 1535.

The Butlers took up arms against "Silken Thomas," and the young leader found his forces growing gradually less, and withdrawing from the excommunicated man on promises of pardon and reward. Lord Leonard Grey was sent over to carry on the struggle against his sister's step-son upon the illness of Lord Deputy Skeffington. "Silken Thomas" was hard pressed, and Lord Leonard Grey succeeded in inducing him to surrender by the promise that his life should be spared. About these terms of surrender there is much difference of opinion. King

Henry VIII. refused to be bound by them, and censured Lord Leonard for making any such promise. "Silken Thomas" was taken to London, and immediately sent to the Tower. His five uncles were treacherously seized at a banquet, carried also to London, and sent to join him in the same woful captivity. Thrown into a comfortless dungeon, and left without money, or clothes, we find the young leader, once of the silken attire and costly equipage, writing to his friend O'Brien of Thomond for money to buy necessaries of life—"In the severity of winter I had often had to go barefoot and barelegged, only that poor prisoners, of their gentleness, had given me old shoes, stockings, and shirts." This was the plight of the head of the Geraldines! The end came on 3rd of February, 1537, when Thomas, and his five uncles, were executed on Tower Hill as traitors.

The following account, slightly abridged from Wright's *History of Ireland,* tells how Lady Elizabeth saved the house of Fitzgerald from total extinction.

"When the brothers and the eldest son of the late Earl of Kildare experienced the sweeping vengeance of the law, there yet remained two distinct representatives of the family. The Earl had left two sons by his second wife, the Lady Elizabeth Grey, Gerald and Edward, the eldest of whom was now about twelve or thirteen years of age. The younger child had been conveyed to England, and was with his mother, the Countess, at the manor of her family, Beaumanoir in Leicestershire. But Gerald Fitzgerald, the elder, and heir, had been entrusted to the care of that staunch adherent of the family, James Delahyde, and was now with him at the Court of O'Brien of Thomond. It was the wish to obtain his person that

led to so many government expeditions against Thomond at this time. The young Earl, whose misfortunes excited sympathy from one end of Ireland to the other, was destined soon to be made the motive of a more formidable conspiracy of the Irish chiefs.

"The royal commissioners sent to Ireland in 1537 held a conference in the fields without Clonmel with James FitzJohn of Desmond, and he gave them unbounded promises of fidelity, none of which he performed. The commissioners especially urged him to use his endeavours that young Gerald Fitzgerald should be delivered into their hands. They promised a full pardon for the only offence with which this youth was charged—that of 'having withdrawn himself from the King's Majesty without ground, or cause.' They assured Desmond that the King had never any intention towards the young Geraldine except such as tended to his honour and welfare, 'and to have cherished him as his Kinsman, in like sort as his other brother is cherished, with his mother, in the realm of England.' Desmond wearied the commissioners with delusive promises, until they began 'to think it folly to give any further faith either to his word or writings.' However, in March, 1538, this Desmond was obliged to give up his son as hostage for his good behaviour.

"The young Gerald Fitzgerald was now the hope and rallying-point of the Geraldines, and was the grand object of solicitude among those who were opposed to English rule. He had about this time been conveyed with great secrecy from Thomond to Desmond, to be placed under the care of his aunt, Lady Eleanor, now a widow, and The MacCarthy Reagh, who was chieftain of that district.

He was thus under the immediate protection of the Earl of Desmond, the head of the other branch of the Fitzgeralds."

Lady Eleanor, although she must have been over fifty, was probably still a handsome woman. For some time since her widowhood she had been desired in marriage by Manus O'Donnell, the much-married, Chieftain of Tyr-Connell. Manus was a man of more than middle age who had already buried two wives. He was married in all five times. He had long exercised the rights of Chief during the old age of his father, Hugh, and thus caused the enmity of his younger brothers. His father had lately died, and Manus had been formally inaugurated Chieftain of Tyr-Connell, having promised Lord Leonard Grey, the Lord Deputy, "to do good service as ever his father did to the English Crown." The sincerity of his promises may be judged from this story. He was, in his way, a remarkable man, a scholar, and a ruler of much power. He is described as "a learned man, skilled in many arts, with a profound intellect and knowledge of every science, the friend of *ollaves,* and men of letters, yet withall crafty and cruel."

Negotiations had been carried on for some time for the marriage of Eleanor with this Manus. At last the widow yielded to O'Donnell's courtship at the urgent desire of her own kindred, who hoped thus, not only to secure a safe asylum for the young heir of the vast power of the Earls of Kildare, but to lay the foundation of a confederacy which should eventually lead to his restoration.

In the month of May, 1538, messengers came from O'Donnell, and from his great neighbour O'Neil, to the Earl of Desmond to bring this marriage to a conclusion.

They were met by the Lady Eleanor, and her nephew, who accompanied them first to the Court of O'Brien in Thomond. From thence they travelled on, with a very slight escort, to Ulick Bourke (of Clanrickarde) who passed them on safely to the MacWilliam Bourkes of Mayo and Sligo. They were accompanied by James Delahyde, a priest named Walshe, who was the late Earl's chaplain, and young Gerald's tutor, Leveroux. Thence they proceeded to Donegal, without having experienced any obstruction during this long journey. From this moment, the council at Dublin began to be alarmed with the reports of the designs and preparations of the two northern chieftains, and of their secret practices with the King's enemies in Scotland.

The ease with which this small party travelled nearly the whole of Ireland from north to south, revealed a strong feeling of sympathy among a large part of the people of Ireland, and a want of good intelligence and foresight on the part of the Government, who, in spite of the King's anxiety to obtain possession of the young heir of Kildare, were only informed of his departure to the north, and of the marriage of the Lady Eleanor with Manus O'Donnell, by common report some time after both events had taken place. The near relationship of the young fugitive to his uncle Lord Leonard Grey raised suspicions of collusion on the part of the Lord Deputy, which were busily circulated by his enemies. These excited against him the enmity of the Butlers, whose interests he crossed, and of the Council, who accused him of acting on his own responsibility. Lord Grey indeed identified himself too closely with the feuds of the Irish clans. In the end Lord Grey found himself at the block

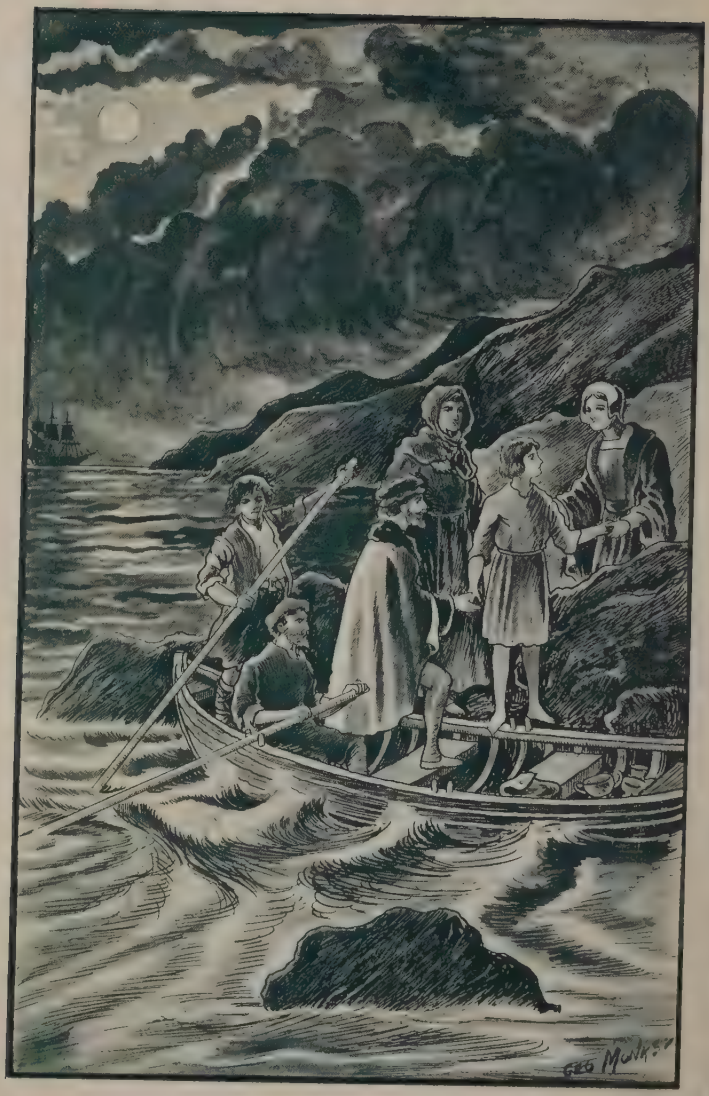
on Tower Hill, and what mistakes he made he paid for with his head.

It was soon understood that the removal of the young Fitzgerald heir from Thomond was not merely a measure of protection. It was the result of a deliberate plan, of which one of the least objects was Gerald's restoration by force of arms to the titles and possessions of his family. The design extended to the expulsion of the English rulers, and the establishment of O'Neil, or some other chief, as King of Ireland. This was proved not only by the attempts to obtain help from Scotland, but also from France and Spain. In April, 1539, Lord Grey went to Dundalk where Manus O'Donnell and O'Neil promised to bring young Gerald, and deliver him up. Neither appeared, and the whole thing seems to have been a snare in which one tried to over-reach the other.

In the beginning of 1540, the confederacy between O'Brien, O'Donnell, and O'Neil was apparently unimpaired. But now O'Neil took the lead, and it was evident that the restoration of the young heir Gerald was but a secondary consideration, since O'Neil's aim was the Kingship of Ireland. Grey, however, fell upon him at Dungannon, and almost captured him.

These energetic proceedings of the Lord Deputy seem to have damped the spirits of the Irish. Events followed which led to the break up of this formidable confederacy. The first was the flight of young Gerald Fitzgerald into France.

Treachery seems to have been actively at work against the young heir, and reports of a later period point to O'Donnell himself as the traitor. Perhaps the pretensions of O'Neil revived the old jealousies between the O'Neils and the O'Donnells.


GEO MONKER

Towards the middle of March, 1540, a merchant ship of St. Malo, which happened to be in one of the harbours of the shores of Donegal was engaged to convey a small party to the coast of Brittany. Under concealment of the night, a small cock-boat carried on board four persons, two of whom were young Gerald, and his tutor, Leveroux, and one of the others was Robert Walshe, the faithful chaplain of the Fitzgeralds.

One Bartholomew Warner, English Agent at St. Malo, has given an account of young Gerald's flight, which is here given in modernised spelling. He says he had his information from a solicitor in St. Malo, who "was instructed on the following by the same person who brought him (Gerald) over, whose name is Allen Governors, dwelling in St. Malo. He, being with his ship on merchandise in Ireland, near to those parts where great O'Donnell's abiding is, there came to him the said O'Donnell (or was it his lady?) with certain other religious persons, or men of the Church, the which entreated him bring over the said Fitzgerald, the which thing was agreed, and an act passed between them signed by a notary. . . . In the which act he was bound to render him safe aland at St. Malo, and the others that should pass likewise with him, and a certain number of silver vessels also. The said Fitzgerald was conveyed aboard the ship in the night, in a small cocke [boat] having on but a saffron shirt, bare-legged and bare-headed, like one of the wild Irish, having with him three persons. The one was a priest, his name they know not, but they say he is his school-master, and hath governed him ever since the death of his father, the which, they say also, keepeth him so under, that and if he rebuke him never so little,

he trembleth with fear. The second's name, they say, is Robert. His surname they know not. And the other he heard not called by his name, wherefore he could give me no knowledge thereof."

It is evident, from the secrecy and precautions with which young Gerald embarked, that at least treachery was feared, from which Manus O'Donnell was not able to protect his young ward, even had he the inclination. The historian Stanihurst talked with the fugitive in later times, when he had been restored to his title, and questioned the Earl of Kildare upon the events of his early history. Stanihurst tells that it was the Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald who contrived her nephew's escape, and conducted him, and his small party, to the boat which was to carry them to France, and safety. He further adds that it was Lady Eleanor who discovered, or suspected, the secret treachery of her new husband. Upon this, she immediately left him, and went back to her own country in the south. Here are Stanihurst's own words :

"But shortly after, the gentlewoman, either by some secret friend informed, or of her wisdom gathering that her lately married husband intended some treachery, had her nephew disguised, storing him, like a liberal and bountiful Aunt with seven score porteguses [Portugees gold coins, often kept as heirlooms or keepsakes] not only in value, but also in the self same coin, incontenently shipped him in a Breton vessel of St. Malouse, betaking him to God, and to their charge that accompanied him, to wit Master Leveroux and Robert Walshe, sometime servant to his father the Earl. The Lady Eleanor, having thus to her contentation bestowed her nephew, she expostulated very sharply with O'Donnell as touch-

ing his villany, protesting that the only cause of her match with him proceeded from an especial care to have her nephew countenanced; and now that he was out of his lash that minded to have betrayed him, she should well understand that, as the fear of his danger moved her to honour such a clownish curmudgeon, so the assurance of his safety should cause her to sequester herself from so butcherly a cut-throat, that would be like a pelting mercenarie patch, hired to sell, or betray, the innocent blood of his nephew by affinity, and hers by consanguinity. And in this wise, trussing up bag and baggage, she forsook O'Donnell, and returned to her own country."

The mists of her southern mountains close again round Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald. There is a little rift in 1544. During Henry VIII.'s French wars, alarms were raised in Ireland that the King of France was preparing to send young Gerald, heir of Kildare, accompanied by a powerful army, to drive the English out of Ireland. This inclined many of the native chiefs to waver in their alliances with England. It was believed that the invaders would land in the south, in the MacCarthy's country, because The MacCarthy had not submitted to the English Government, and the clan was still devoted to the interest of their kinsmen the Geraldines. Besides this, the Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald, who had been so active in the cause of her nephew in 1538, was known to be then residing among them. But the alarms were groundless. Neither young Gerald, nor the powerful French army, came.

Since the story of Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald is closely bound up with that of her nephew the young Geraldine, it is interesting to quote here the account of his adventures on the Continent. They were singularly romantic.

"Having reached St. Malo in safety, he was taken under the protection of the governor of the province, Monsieur de Chateaubriant. He remained with him a month, and then the King of France placed him with the young Dauphin, afterwards Henri II. The King of England intrigued to obtain possession of the fugitive, and agents were employed in tracing out his place of concealment. As soon as it was known that Gerald was in France, Sir John Wallop, the English Ambassador, made formal demand that the French King should deliver up the boy, adding that he was the brother of one who had been recently beheaded in London as a notorious traitor. The King evaded the demand by saying that he was only bound to reply to it when the Ambassador showed his special commission, and intimated that the age of the fugitive must clear him of all suspicion of being connected with his brother's treasons. Wallop went to England for further instructions, and, in the meanwhile, young Gerald was privately removed by Leveroux to Valenciennes in Flanders, within the dominion of the Emperor Charles V.

"This was not done so secretly as to escape the vigilance of Wallop, who sent his spy Sherlock to Valenciennes. Leveroux, however, discovered the intrigue against his pupil, and gave information to the governor of the town, who found a pretext to imprison Sherlock while Fitzgerald was removed to Brussels, where the Emperor held his Court.

"The Emperor gave Fitzgerald the same protection as did the King of France, but since the English Ambassador at the Emperor's Court was also instructed to demand the boy's delivery, Gerald was sent privately to the safe-keeping of the Bishop of Liege, the Emperor allowing him

a pension of a hundred crowns a month. The Bishop entertained him according to his rank, placed him in a monastery at Liege, and kept a vigilant watch over his safety.

"Meanwhile the news of his place of retreat was conveyed to his kinsman Cardinal Pole in Rome. After six months, Pole sent for Gerald, settled an annuity of three hundred crowns upon him, and treated him with the greatest affection. He placed the lad successively with the Bishop of Verona, the Cardinal of Mantua, and with the Duke of Mantua, that he might be fitted to hold his own as a scholar, and as an accomplished gentleman. Leveroux, his faithful tutor, who shared his banishment, and watched over his safety, was admitted by Pole into the English Hospital of St. John in Rome. The other companions of Gerald's flight returned to Ireland.

"After a year and a half Pole recalled the young heir of Kildare to Rome, and for three years himself superintended his education. The Duke of Mantua also allowed him three hundred crowns. When Gerald entered his nineteenth year, the Cardinal gave him the choice whether he would continue his studies with the view of becoming an ecclesiastic, or travel to foreign courts to see the world, and follow the profession of arms. The youth preferred the latter, and by the Cardinal's recommendation, went to Naples.

"At Naples, meeting some Knights of Rhodes, Gerald went with them to Malta, and from thence sailed to Tripoli, then one of the Knight's forts. There he served for six weeks under Montbrizon, fighting against the Turks and Moors. Gerald returned to Malta with great booty, and, after a year at Malta, bent his steps again to

Italy, where Cardinal Pole received him with joy, and increased his pension to pounds instead of crowns."

Through the Cardinal's influence Gerald became Master of the Horse to Cosmo de Medici, "the Magnificent," Duke of Florence, and remained with him three years. During that time, he met with an accident by which his life was nearly ended. This is Stanihurst's account of it :—

"One day the heir of Kildare travelled to Rome a-Shroving, of set purpose to be merry. As he rode, he hunted with the Pope's nephew, Cardinal Farnese. In his eager pursuit of a buck, Gerald was separated from his companions, and, ignorant of the locality, fell into a pit nine-and-twenty fathoms deep. His horse was killed by the fall, but Fitzgerald, snatching desperately at a mass of tangled roots at the side of the pit, at no great distance from the bottom, was thus enabled to break his fall. When he could hold on no longer, he slid himself down upon the dead horse, and stood on it for the space of three hours, over his ankles in water.

"Only a favourite greyhound had followed his track, and the faithful dog now stood at the edge of the pit, howling incessantly. Cardinal Farnese and his train, having missed Fitzgerald, and sought him unsuccessfully, were, at last, guided to the spot by the cries of the greyhound, and succeeded, by means of ropes, in rescuing him with difficulty from his peril."

At last, in 1547, the death of Henry VIII. released Gerald from fears of his personal safety. He returned to England in the reign of young Edward VI. and was admitted to Court. His graceful manners and person captivated Mabel, the child of old Sir Anthony Browne,

the step-daughter of his sister, "the Fair Geraldine," who had become old Sir Anthony's second wife. Gerald's marriage with Mabel Browne gave him further interest and royal favour, for Sir Anthony had been the friend, as well as the servant, of Henry VIII., who had left him guardian of his son, Edward VI. Gerald was made a Knight of the Garter, and, in 1552, his manor of Maynooth, and a large portion of his forefather's estates, were restored to him. The young man is described as "an expert horseman, valiant, small of stature, slender of person, very courteous, but hard and angry at times, a great gatherer of money, and addicted to gambling."

In Mary's reign, Gerald Fitzgerald's connection with Cardinal Pole, and his persecutions by the Protestant party, were new titles to Court favour. Gerald was now restored by letters patent to the titles of Earl of Kildare, and Baron Offaly, and to all estates forfeited by his father. His tutor Leveroux shared in his good fortune. He was recalled from Rome, and given the Bishopric of Kildare.

We may hope that Gerald's Aunt Eleanor, the devoted and intrepid heroine of his escape, was alive to welcome his return, and that she saw him restored to his grandfather's estates, and, in a measure, to his position in Ireland. We have no record of the date of her death. Manus O'Donnell died in February, 1563, at Lifford Castle, a very old man, having been kept in prison for many years by his well known son Calvagh O'Donnell. He married twice after Eleanor Fitzgerald left him. His wife, Margaret Macdonnell, of Isla, died in 1544.

Gerald, eleventh Earl of Kildare, returned to Ireland, and sat in the Irish parliament in 1559. He, too, in Queen Elizabeth's days, found his way to the Tower, with

his son Henry, and his son-in-law Lord Delvin, but he was released in 1583, on giving a bond for £2,000 to remain within twenty miles of London, and not to come within three miles of Her Majesty's Court. In the following year, the Queen forgave him, allowed him to wait upon her, and return to Dublin. He died in London in 1586, and was buried at Kildare.

By that time a new page of Irish history had been turned, and new conditions had arisen.

CHAPTER X.

LADY ELIZABETH FITZGERALD.—"THE FAIR GERALDINE."

"A portrait, three letters, and fourteen pretty lines would have hardly preserved 'the Fair Geraldine's' memory had it not been for the tragic fates of her father, her brother, and her poet." This is true. Neverthless the story of the Geraldines in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is the story of Ireland. Hence it is not surprizing that four of the remarkable women of this period bear the Fitzgerald name. Elizabeth was the least notable, yet she is perhaps the best known of the four, having been immortalized by the poet Lord Surrey as "The Fair Geraldine."

She was the youngest daughter of Gerald Oge, ninth Earl of Kildare. She was the sister of Gerald, eleventh Earl, whose escapes and adventurous boyhood have been described in the previous pages, and half-sister of the ill-fated "Silken Thomas." Her poet was Henry Howard, by courtesy Earl of Surrey, the son of the Duke of Norfolk, who was unjustly beheaded by Henry VIII.

Gerald Oge married twice. Both his marriages were probably made for reasons politically prudent, but they seem also to have been fortunate for personal reasons. The two Countesses of Kildare were both amiable women, possessed of estimable qualities. The first Countess, mother of "Silken Thomas," is described as "a woman of rare probity of mind, and in every way commendable."

She was a daughter of Sir John Zouche of Codner. This lady died, suddenly, in 1517. She was buried beside her husband's mother in the Monastery of Friars Observant at Killucan.

The year after the death of his first wife—as has already been told—Gerald Oge was summoned to England to answer to the charges of his many enemies, of whom the Butlers were the chief. It was laid to his charge that he had enriched himself with Crown revenues and lands, and that he had formed alliances with divers Irish, enemies of the State. He wrote to Henry VIII. defending himself, but eventually, he sailed for London to rebut these charges. While living there, awaiting an enquiry into his conduct, he met, and married, Lady Elizabeth Grey, fourth daughter of Thomas, Marquis of Dorset, and grand-daughter of Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV. She was sister to that Lord Leonard Grey, some time Lord Deputy of Ireland, mentioned in the stories of her sisters-in-law, Margaret and Eleanor Fitzgerald. She was also first cousin to King Henry VIII. By this marriage Gerald Oge gained much influence at the English Court. He was soon in high favour, and accompanied Henry VIII. to France, where he was present at the famous pageant when Henry met Francis I. on the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." There he was distinguished for his appearance, being accounted one of the handsomest men in that brilliant assembly. He afterwards returned to Ireland, and resumed the position in his own country, held by the heads of his powerful house, which was, for all intents and purposes, that of Ard-Righ, or Monarch. In the year 1520, however, Gerald was superseded as Viceroy by Lord Surrey, father of the illustrious poet-

courtier, whose verses afterwards immortalized Gerald's beautiful daughter. The great dynasty of the Geraldines was overthrown, and, strangely enough, it received its first blow from the hand of him whose son, by his poetic

"THE FAIR GERALDINE."

love for a daughter of this house, endowed the name of "the Fair Geraldine" with lasting fame.

Gerald Oge's second marriage was happy. Countess Elizabeth, the second, is always alluded to with much

respect, and Stanihurst, a chronicler of those times, records that the Earl of Kildare "was so well affected to his wife, the Ladie Grey, that he would not at any time buy a suit of apparel for himself but he would suit her with the same stuff. Which gentleness she recompensed with equal kindness; for, after his decease in the Tower, she did not only ever after live as a chaste and honourable widow, but also, nightly, before she went to bed, she would resort to his picture, and there with a solemn congee, she would bid her lorde goodnight. Whereby may be gathered with how great love she affected his person that had in such price his base picture."

They had five children, Gerald, who became eleventh Earl, and whose eventful story has been told with that of his Aunt Eleanor; Edward, father of the fourteenth Earl; Margaret, who was deaf and dumb; Cecily; and Elizabeth. It has been suggested that Cecily was "the Fair Geraldine" of Surrey's sonnets, but the probabilities are distinctly in favour of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was born in Ireland, very likely at Maynooth, in 1528. These were the days of her father's power, and of his rivalry and enmity with the Butlers. She was about four or five years old when her father received the wound from a musket ball at the siege of Birr Castle which ruined his health, and embittered his disposition. He was once more Lord Deputy when it was discovered that his kinsman the Earl of Desmond was plotting with the King of France an invasion of Ireland for the overthrow of the English power there. Kildare was directed to invade Desmond, and capture the rebel Earl. He invaded Desmond, but did not capture his kinsman. He was accused of conniving at his escape, and again

summoned to England to answer before the King. He hesitated, and pleaded ill-health. Meanwhile, his wife went to England, in 1533, and brought with her little Elizabeth to be educated. Elizabeth was six years old when her father came to London to justify himself for the last time. These were dangerous times at Court, when men could scarcely keep their heads upon their shoulders. On this occasion, the Court influence of his wife failed. There was no favour, no "Field of the Cloth of Gold," but instead ill-health, and hardship, and heart-ache in the Tower. His little daughter was scarcely eight when her father died, broken-hearted, because of the ruin which his son "Silken Thomas's" revolt had brought upon the Fitzgeralds, and when her step-brother, "Silken Thomas" himself, with his five uncles, were executed as rebels on Tower Hill. Let us hope the little maid, scarcely realized what tragedies had befalled the house of Fitzgerald.

After Gerald Oge's death in 1534, the Countess of Kildare and her children retired to Beaumanoir in Leicestershire, the house of her brother, Lord Leonard Grey. In 1538, when she was ten years old, Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald was chosen to be one of the maids of honour to her kinswoman, Princess Mary, afterwards Queen Mary. She entered Princess Mary's household at Hunsdon, which had been built by Henry VIII. for his children. The Lady Mary Bryan, governess to the King's children, mentions Lady Elizabeth in a letter to the King's Minister, Thomas Cromwell.

It was at Hunsdon that Henry Howard first saw his fair Geraldine. She was then only twelve. He was twenty-one. He was already married to Lady Frances

Vere, daughter of John, fifteenth Earl of Oxford, and was already a father, his son having been born in 1536. His marriage had been made by Anne Boleyn. She had first urged Henry VIII. to marry Surrey to the Princess Mary, but in vain. Before the birth of Henry VIII.'s son, Edward, Surrey's grandfather, the old Duke of Norfolk, was regarded as a possible heir to the throne of England. The Howards belonged to the Old Religion, and were watched by Henry VIII. with suspicion. Henry Howard had lived a varied life at Henry VIII.'s Court. He had many gifts, but much in his career gave colour to the report of Cromwell's spies that he was "the most foolish proud boy that is in England." He was as poor as the Countess of Kildare herself, who was at this time living in extreme penury. It will be seen that Surrey's romantic admiration for young Elizabeth Fitzgerald must have been purely platonic and poetical. His grandfather the old Duke of Norfolk lived not far from Hunsdon, and with him Henry was wont to spend most of the summer. No doubt he was admitted to the household of the Princess Mary. As well as this, Elizabeth's uncle, Lord Leonard Grey, the unfortunate Lord Deputy of Ireland, in whose house her mother now lived, was Surrey's intimate friend. This accounts for his connection with "the Fair Geraldine." Although scarcely in her teens, when he first saw her at Hunsdon, she was already budding into a lovely woman.

In 1540, the Princess Mary's household at Hunsdon was broken up, and Elizabeth Fitzgerald became Maid of Honour to Queen Catherine Howard at Hampton Court. Here Surrey renewed his acquaintance with her. In the same year he began to write the series of sonnets and

songs in her honour, which have made the beauty and sweetness of "the Fair Geraldine" famous ever since.

Surrey modelled his romantic adoration of Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald upon that of the Italian Petrarch for his Laura. It is plain that to the young courtier-poet, she was but an ideal, an abstraction, a beautiful inspiration, like a picture, or a dream. Such ideal attachments were the literary fashion of the age. Surrey writes the *Description and Praise of Geraldine* as follows:—

"From Tuscane came my lady's worthy race,
Fair Florence was some time their ancient seat.
The western isle, whose pleasant short doth face
Wild Camber's cliffs, did give her lively heat.
Fostered was she by milk of Irish breast.
Her sire an Earl, her dame of Princes' blood.
From tender years in Britain doth she rest,
With King's child; where she tasteth costly food,
Hunsdon did first present her to mine eyen;
Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight
Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine
And Windsor, alas! doth chase me from her sight.
Her beauty of kind; her virtues from above
Happy is he that can attain her love."

In sonnets such as these he expressed his admiration and devotion. He took "the Fair Geraldine" for his Queen of Beauty in the lists, and at a Tournament in France he defied the world to produce a more lovely lady than his. He was victorious over all who came, and the crown of beauty was unanimously awarded to the fair Irishwoman. There is also an account of how Surrey consulted an alchemist living in Florence, Cornelius Agrippa, very

famous in his day, to try if he could look into the future, and find out something concerning his fair lady. It is told how, by means of a magic mirror, the astrologer showed to the Earl of Surrey the figure of "the Fair Geraldine" lying on a couch, and by the light of a candle, reading one of Surrey's sonnets. This incident has been used by Sir Walter Scott in his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, but the probabilities are that Surrey was never in Italy in his life.

It has been said that the Fitzgeralds at this time were desperately poor. This fact may have accounted for the marriage of Lady Elizabeth at the age of sixteen to a man of sixty, a widower with ten children. Sir Anthony Browne was an old courtier. Before Elizabeth was born he was Esquire of the Body to Henry VIII., and from that time until the death of Henry—which only preceded his own by one year—he became more and more the friend of his sovereign. His first wife was Alys, daughter of Sir John Gage, Constable of the Tower. He seems to have always been about the persons of the Royal children, and it was probably in this way that he met his fair young wife. They were married in 1543. The King himself attended the wedding with his daughter Princess Mary, and Ridley preached the sermon. Sir Anthony was a Knight of the Garter, he was standard-bearer to Henry VIII., as his father had been before him to Henry VII. His position at Court is shown by the fact that the King chose him to go to the Court of John of Cleeves to be married to Anne of Cleeves as proxy for his royal master. By his will Henry VIII. made him one of his executors, guardian to his son Edward, and to the Princess Elizabeth, and left him £300.

The last years of Henry VIII.'s life were dangerous to many. Heads were lost for merely denying his supremacy, and the King's tyranny and caprice were such that none felt themselves secure. The Duke of Norfolk, and his son the Earl of Surrey, were thrown into the Tower on frivolous charges. The real cause of their imprisonment was doubtless their adherence to the old religion. The charges against Lord Surrey were that he had quartered his arms, on his coat of arms, with those of Edward the Confessor (as all his ancestors did), that he studied Italian, and was fond of conversing with foreigners, which suggested to the suspicious King that he corresponded with Cardinal Pole. The accomplished young Earl was declared guilty of high treason, and was beheaded on January 19th, 1547. His father, the Duke of Norfolk's death-warrant was signed on January 27th, but Henry VIII. died on January 29th, before it could be executed, and thus the Duke escaped.

The King's temper was so terrific, even to the last, that none dare give him even a hint of the approach of his end. At last, Sir Anthony Browne, "with good courage and conscience," undertook to tell the King that he had not long to live. It was old Sir Anthony, also, who went to the boy Edward VI. to bring him the news of his accession, and who rode beside him to London as his Master of the Horse. But the old man did not long survive the master whom he had faithfully served through a long life. On May 6th, 1548, Sir Anthony died in his house at Byfleet, Surrey, and was buried, with great pomp, at Battle Abbey, beside his first wife, Alys Gage.

After five years of married life "the Fair Geraldine" was left a widow at the age of twenty. Her two boy

babes were dead. Her admirer and immortalizer, Surrey, was dead also. After the death of Henry VIII., Elizabeth's brother Gerald, the young Earl of Kildare, was able to return from his exile on the Continent. No doubt he sought out his young widowed sister, for he married her step-daughter, Mabel, daughter of Sir Anthony Browne, and Alys Gage, his first wife.

In 1552, after four years of widowhood, Lady Elizabeth Browne married again. She became the third wife of Lord Admiral Edward Fiennes de Clinton, Earl of Lincoln. Her character seems to have developed much in these years, for we find the beautiful child of Surrey's songs in the close confidence of her second husband, assisting him by her quick Irish wit, and acting as his secretary in matters of State. A letter is in existence transcribed partly by her hand, and finished in his. Life seems to have flowed smoothly for her, except for the friction with her step-children, the Earl of Lincoln's sons and daughters by his second marriage. She and the Earl of Lincoln lived a long life of thirty-three years together, and as little is recorded of their doings, it may be assumed that it was, on the whole, peaceful and happy. There is no record of any return of "the Fair Geraldine" to her native land. There was little enough in those days, in the conditions of the Fitzgerald fortunes, to tempt her to revisit Ireland. The Island of Saints and Scholars had fallen on evil days. Men and women lay there in the forests, and on the road-sides, dead from starvation, with mouths green with the weeds with which they had striven to stay the pangs of hunger. The soldiery of Queen Elizabeth had made a desert, if they could not, even then, call it peace.

The Earl of Lincoln died in 1585, leaving his wife his executrix. She seems to have had no children, or none, at least, that survived infancy. Four years later, in March, 1589, "the Fair Geraldine" died also, and was buried in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, in the stately tomb which she herself had erected in memory of her second husband. There he lies in effigy, clad in armour, with his beautiful wife in sculptured stone beside him. Her sister Margaret was her chief mourner, and sixty-one old women, numbering the years of her life, and, it would appear, pensioners of her bounty, followed the Countess of Lincoln to her grave.

It will be seen that the life of this celebrated Irishwoman differed little from the lives of other well-born women of her day. Its interest lies in the fact of her beauty, which is attested by several portraits still in existence, and in the circumstances which connect her with the brilliant and ill-fated Earl of Surrey, whose poems have enshrined her characteristics and history, and preserved both to the present time.

CHAPTER XI.

CATHELYN FITZGERALD.—THE "OLD COUNTESS" OF DESMOND.

Much as we may love life, and desire to see good days, probably few Irishwomen envy the "Old Countess" of Desmond, although she lived for one hundred and forty years, and her active inclinations were then only checked by a fall from a cherry tree which she had climbed to obtain her favourite fruit.

This, at least, is the popular claim to fame of Catherine —or, to use the old Irish spelling, Cathelyn—Fitzgerald, Countess of Desmond. The uncritical declare that she cut her teeth three times, danced with three English Kings —Richard III., Henry VIII., and Charles I.—and lived in the reigns of eight Sovereigns of England. Not only did she renew her teeth—says popular report—but her youth as well. No infirmity nor decay ended her long life. Indeed it bid fair to be longer but for the accident brought about by her activity, and by her great love of cherries—the rare new fruit, brought from the Canaries by her acquaintance, Sir Walter Raleigh, and domesticated about her old home near Affane.

The true story of "the old Countess," however, differs in many respects from the one told by popular tradition. Her days—and, above all, her latter days—were less lively than the legends suggest. Her true story is sad, and well illustrates the old saying that "Age and Poverty are ill companions." What her age really was is

uncertain. Possibly the figures 140 may have been transposed in the old record, and 104 is nearer the truth. Probably the story about the royal dances is altogether fictitious.

At the same time, there is something in the historical account of this indomitable old woman that stirs the blood, and stiffens the back. Ireland is still the country of many such, unto this day. Never was there a more characteristic Irishwoman than this Cathelyn, doubly Fitzgerald, who

"Never turned her back, but marched breast forward,"

hard and difficult as was her path, at the last. There is much of which her countrywomen may well be proud in the life of this stately old lady. She lived on, bravely, through generation after generation, during the fall, and utter ruin, of her noble house, and served as the last link between the old Ireland, and that sadder country where rebellions and settlements had failed alike to do their intended work.

The eighteen Earls of Desmond were descended, through a younger, but scarcely less powerful branch, from Maurice the head of the Geraldine house in Ireland. But the Earls of Desmond were even more completely Irish in sympathies and interests than were the Earls of Kildare. Their history is even more full of romance. It teems with incidents and adventures which would fill many volumes.

Thomas, the eighth Earl, was a fast friend of King Edward IV. Yet he was beheaded as a rebel at Drogheda in 1468, it is said because he called Elizabeth Woodville, whom Edward IV. had married, "a tailor's widow." The facts are that Thomas disapproved of such a match, and told the King so. In after days, Edward IV. is reported

to have said to the Queen that "he wished he had listened to Desmond's advice." From henceforth, Elizabeth Woodville sought his destruction, and she compassed it by means of her ally the Lord Deputy, Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. This tragedy made rebels of the House of Desmond. The five sons of Earl Thomas rose in rebellion against English rule.

The third son of Thomas eighth Earl—another Thomas—after many years became, in his turn, twelfth Earl of Desmond. He was the husband of Cathelyn Fitzgerald, the "old Countess."

Cathelyn was altogether Geraldine. She was the daughter of Sir John Fitzgerald of Decies, and of Ellen Fitzgerald, a daughter of the White Knight. She was born at Dromana, Co. Waterford, in 1464, the third year of the reign of Edward IV. In 1483, when she was nineteen, according to some accounts, she married her kinsman Thomas of Desmond. He was ten years her senior, a widower, with one son. He was nicknamed "the Bald," but the bards also called him "the Victorious." "In nine battles"—say they—"he won the palm." He seems to have been as violent and warlike as the rest of the Desmonds, for it is told that he slew the father of his first wife in battle with his own hand. She was Sheela, daughter of Cormac MacCarthy, and some uncertainty as to when she died throws doubt on the exact date of Thomas of Desmond's marriage with Cathelyn. In later life, a Government despatch reported of Thomas that:—"Albeit his years requireth quietness and rest, yet intendeth he as much trouble as ever did any of his nation."

Cathelyn's marriage took place, it is said, in London,

and Richard Crookback, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III., was at the wedding, and danced with the bride. In an article written by Horace Walpole in 1758, he refers to "A certain Sir Walter St. John, and a certain old Lady Dacre, who were said to have conversed with the ultra venerable Countess." They reported the

"THE OLD COUNTESS" OF DESMOND.

Countess of Desmond to have declared that Richard III. "was the handsomest man in the room, except his brother Edward, and he was very well made." "From her oral declaration they have handed down this description of the caluminated prince."

In 1487, James, her husband's eldest brother, who had succeeded his father as ninth Earl, was foully murdered by his servant Shawn Murtagh, at the instigation of James's younger brother John. After this base deed of blood, it was noticed that the shadow of violent death seemed never to be lifted from the house of Desmond.

Murdered James was succeeded by Maurice, tenth Earl, his brother next in age, who lived until 1520, and held the title for thirty-three years. Maurice's only son James held the Earldom for nine years. Therefore when, on his death in 1529 leaving no son, his uncle Thomas succeeded him as twelfth Earl, he was well advanced in years. He was probably about seventy-six, his wife Cathelyn was sixty-six, and their one child, a daughter, must have been no longer young.

In his old age, Thomas, Earl of Desmond, professed loyalty to the English Crown, but his heir, his grandson Thomas, was kept at Hampton Court by Henry VIII. as a hostage for the old man's good behaviour. Hence, he was nick-named in Ireland "the Court Page." "The Court Page's" father, James, died of plague just six months after his grandfather succeeded to the Earldom.

When his young Geraldine kinsman "Silken Thomas" rebelled, the Earl of Desmond was among the first to whom the English Government applied "to catch the traitor." But the old man himself was closely pursued by the Archer Death, for he breathed his last in the same year —1534—in his castle at Youghal in his 81st year, and was laid in a stately tomb erected by his widow Cathelyn in the Franciscan Priory at Youghal, where were the graves of his father, and his son.

After his grandfather's death, "the Court Page"

returned to Ireland to take up his estates. But he found that these had been already seized by his savage old grand-uncle Sir John of Desmond, who argued, in justification of his act, that "the Court Page" was no longer an Irishman, or fit to rule and lead Irishmen, for the reason that "he speaks very good English, and keepeth his hair and cap after the English fashion."

The Desmond clan and followers sat in judgment upon this charge against "the Court Page," and found the young man guilty. His estates, accordingly, were handed over—by Irish law—to his granduncle John of Desmond. "The Court Page" seems to have had some Irish cunning in the head covered by the English cap, for he tried to recover his rights, and married a daughter of The MacCarthy Mor, with whom he made alliance. But he did not succeed in recovering his estates. These were kept by John of Desmond, and transmitted to his son James, who finally murdered "the Court Page," and succeeded as the fifteenth Earl, being known as "the Traitor." "The Traitor" was succeeded by Gerald, who is known as "the Great Earl of Desmond." He was also "the Last Earl." He it was who raised the insurrection against the Crown of England which speedily completed the ruin of the Desmond family.

This Gerald, last Earl of Desmond, induced Cathelyn to assign to him her Castle of Inchequin, the ruins of which remain on the sea-coast, about five miles from Youghal. This stronghold had been left to her as a jointure house, and here she and her daughter—now an old woman also—lived alone. The deed is still preserved in the Dublin Exchequer. Having possessed himself of Cathelyn's strong tower of Inchequin, with its walls twelve

feet thick, and its lands, Gerald passed them on to his servants for use as a stronghold during his revolt.

His rising was unsuccessful, and his end, and the end of his house, left the venerable Countess Cathelyn a beggar. But for the leniency of the English Government, which cancelled all deeds and grants made by the rebel from the date of his first insurrection, the old lady would have been left without even the shelter of a roof. This, at least, was spared to her, for Sir Walter Raleigh, who makes mention several times of "the Ladie Cathelyn," writes to Queen Elizabeth in 1591 complaining that all the neighbourhood of Youghal had been let out to English settlers "and there remaynes unto me but an old Castle and demayne which are yet in occupation of the old Countess of Desmond for her jointure."

In his *Historie of the World,* Sir Walter Raleigh writes :—"I myself knew the old Countess of Desmond of Inchequin in Munster, who lived in the year 1589 and many years since [after] who was married in Edward the Fourth's time, and held her joynture from all the Earls of Desmond since then; and that this is true all the noblemen and gentlemen of Munster can witness." In the life of "Old Parr," who lived to be the same age as Cathelyn Fitzgerald, there is the following :—

"Sir Walter Raleigh, a most learned Knight,
Doth of an Irish Countess (Desmond) write,
Of sevenscore years of age, he with her spake,
The Lord St. Albans doth more mention make
That she was married in fourth Edward's reign,
Thrice shed her teeth, which three times came again."

The English colonization of Munster in the days of Queen Elizabeth did Cathelyn much injury. The

The old Countess of D——

English settlers encroached so much upon the lands of Inchequin that the old Countess was once more reduced to beggary.

She now possessed nothing but her bare walls, within which she lived with her old daughter, grown more decrepid than herself. They seem to have had no attendants left. It is recorded by Fynes Morrison in his "Itinerary" that the Countess used to walk across the sands to market at Youghal—a distance of four or five miles—alone in all weathers, in order to bring home the few necessaries for their poor household. There was no longer coach, or retinue. Fynes Morrison was in Ireland from 1599 to 1603, and was shipwrecked on the very coast where "the Old Countess" lived. The picture is sad enough, yet, with the story of the cherry-tree in remembrance, we may fancy the old woman, past the Psalmist's allotted span as she was, resisting valiantly the "labour and sorrow" with a light heart, and a gay face to the last.

Their extreme poverty lasted several years. Bit by bit her last acres, and her feudal rights, were wrested from "the old Countess" by ruthless strangers. In the end, she determined to seek the redress of her wrongs from King James I. herself. Old as she was, she had still the fire and the spirit of the Geraldines within her.

In 1604, the last year of her life, the Countess set out, with her aged daughter, on the long and difficult journey to London. They took ship from Youghal to Bristol, which port they safely reached in two days, the weather being fine. The following account is taken from a "Table Book" of Robert Sydney, second Earl of Leicester, which is now in the Library of the British Museum :—

"The olde Countess of Desmond was a married woman

in Edward IV.'s time of England, and lived till the time of Queen Elizabeth, soe as she needes must be 140 years old. She had a newe sett of teeth not long before her death, and might have lived much longer had she not met with a kind of violent death; for she must needs climb a nutt-tree to gather nuttes, soe, falling down, she hurt her thigh, which brought a fever, and that fever brought death. This, my cosen, Walter Fitzwilliam, told me. This olde lady Mr. Harnet told me came to petition the Queen, and landing at Bristol, shee came on foot to London, being then so old that her daughter was decrepit, and not able to come with her, but was brought in a little cart, their poverty allowing them no better provision of means. As I remember Sir Walter Rawleigh, in some part of his *Historie* speaks of her, and says that he saw her in anno 1589. Her death was as strange and remarkable as her life was, having seene the deaths of soe many descended from her, and both her own, and her husband's house ruined in the rebellion and wars."

There are one or two inaccuracies in the Earl of Leicester's account. The daughter, other sources tell us, broke down from fatigue and want, and her intrepid old mother, nothing daunted, carried her on her back until "the little cart" was obtained, beside the wheel of which the "old Countess" footed it bravely to London. Again, the sovereign whom Cathelyn sought was not Elizabeth, but James I. He received her with compassion, and treated her with the honour due to her rank. He heard her petition, and he granted her justice. He also relieved her immediate necessities, and entertained her suitably during her stay in London. The evidence of this remains upon the old Countess's portrait which King James I.

caused to be painted. This particular portrait—there are several others more or less unauthentic at Windsor, Chatsworth and elsewhere—is in possession of the Herberts, once of Muckross. On the back of it was painted the following :—

"Catherine, Countess of Desmond, as she appeared at the Court of our Sovereign Lord King James, in this present year 1604 in the 140th year of her age. Thither she came from Bristol to seek relief, ye house of Desmond having been ruined by attainder. She was married in the reign of Edward IV., and in the course of her long pilgrimage renewed her teeth twice. Her principal residence is at Inchequin in Munster, whither she undauntedlie proposeth (her purpose accomplished) incontientlie to return. Laus Deo."

The best known portrait of "the Old Countess" is that in the possession of the Knight of Kerry. It was engraved and published by Grogan in 1806. The face is striking, strong, patient, dominant, with high cheek-bones, long nose, and firm mouth. Its likeness to Rembrandt's portraits of his mother has caused some confusion, although it is most unlikely that the Countess ever sat to Rembrandt.

Having secured her rights and lands once more, the old Countess safely accomplished her return journey, we may suppose under improved conditions. She seems to have been in no way the worse of her effort, or her painful experience.

Whether the oft-told tale of the cherry-tree, or nut-tree be true, or not, we cannot now be sure, but it would appear that Cathelyn's death, which occurred the year after her visit to the Court of James I. was the result of an accident.

Where this fine old woman was buried is not known with certainty. Most likely she rests in the Franciscan Priory at Youghal, which the Desmonds founded, and loved well for generations, beside her husband Thomas, in the stately tomb which she had erected for him in days long gone by. But much water flowed beneath the bridges of Youghal even during Cathelyn's lifetime. To-day, no trace remains of either tomb, or Friary. The Friars' lands were confiscated, and were partly built on, partly cultivated as gardens. As one of the chroniclers of the Fitzgeralds of Desmond has put it :—"The Clown now grows his cabbage out of the ashes of brave men and noble gentlewomen belonging to one of the noblest lines in Europe."

CHAPTER XII.

GRAINNE O'MALLEY.—THE PIRATE.

In "the spacious days of Great Elizabeth" another great woman ruled over the wide, wild tract of West Connacht washed by the waters of Clew Bay, and known as Conne-mara—"the Bays of the Sea." This "Queen of the West" was almost the last of the independent Irish chieftains, and she was the most striking figure of her time in the West of Ireland. She was known in old bardic songs as "Grana Uile"—which title was subsequently transferred to the land of her birth itself, and became one of the typical and symbolic names for Ireland. In English records she was known as "Grace" O'Malley. but the English name "Grace" hardly serves as an equivalent for the Irish Grainne or Grana, which signifies in Gaelic "the Ugly."

The O'Malleys ruled as petty Kings over West Connacht. Their sway extended even to the outlying islands of Arran. They, and their people, were, before all else, mariners.

> "A good man never was there
> Of the O'Malleys but a mariner.

wrote an old bard in the fourteenth century.

In the early part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Owen O'Malley, called Dubhdara—"of the Black Oak"—was chieftain of the O'Malleys. Owen's character and quality were set out by Lord Deputy Sydney, who wrote to his

Royal Mistress that:—"O'Maylle came likewise [to court] who is an originall Irisheman, strong in galleys and sea-men; he earnestly sued to hold of the Queen, and to pay her rent and service, crying for justice in so miserable a manner as it would make an English heart to feele compassion for him." This notable chieftain made many expeditions with his fleet for purposes no less of piracy than of commerce. In all these expeditions, Owen's constant companion was his daughter, Grainne. Her love of the sea, and of the mariner's life of peril and conquest, grew with her increasing years.

Grainne was only nineteen years old when her father Owen Dubhdara died. But this dominating and adventurous woman was a born leader, and ruler of men. She immediately took command of her father's fleet in person, set aside her younger brother, and became the virtual head of the O'Malley Clan. The terror of her name flew along the western coast, and the O'Malley mariners readily flocked round the warrior princess, whose valour and conduct brought success to every enterprise. The spirit of Drake and Gilbert stirred under many wild exteriors in the days of "Grana Uile," and this sea-wife, who loved to ride the turbulent Atlantic, and to war with a Nature whose moods were as wild as her own, attracted many bold and desperate adventurers to her service.

Unlike her titular sovereign Elizabeth, Grainne bowed early to the yoke of matrimony. Doubtless her marriage was politically expedient, for it formed an alliance between the two sea-roving tribes of Western Ireland. The good people of Galway added a clause to their Litany, and wrote over their gates—"From the ferocious O'Flaherties, Good Lord deliver us!" The power of this sept of the

O'Flaherties was scarcely less than that of the O'Malleys in Connacht.

Grainne's first husband was Donnell O'Flahertie, chieftain of the Barony of Ballynahinch, nicknamed *an chogaidh*—"of the Wars"—and nicknamed also "the Cock." But for all his belligerent nicknames, and chief though he was of this "ferocious" sept, Donnell O'Flahertie seems to have left little mark upon the history of his time, and to be remembered chiefly as the husband of his wife. "Hen's Castle," on an arm of Lough Corrib, is said to take its name from the fact that Donnell O'Flahertie all but lost it once to the Joyces, when his war-like wife, "the Hen," interfered, and rescued it. "Of the Wars," as he was called, he seems to have died in his bed, leaving Grainne with two young sons. On Donnell's death, the head of the other branch of the O'Flaherties, Teigue O'Flahertie, who lived by Lough Corrib, at Aughanure Castle, seized upon Ballynahinch, and built himself another Castle there. Grainne and her two sons stood out against him, but she could not dispossess him. Teigue was afterwards killed by the English in the risings in 1586.

Grainne's eldest son Owen O'Flahertie also fell a victim to the English under Bingham. He was concerned in the risings of 1586 in Connacht, and he fled, with his people, and his cattle, to one of the islands on the Connemara coast. Bingham crossed over to this island, ostensibly as Owen's friend and guest, and was hospitably entertained. But the next day, a tumult arose in the camp between Owen's people and Bingham's troops, when Owen was promptly put to death by his guest. Owen left a son, Donnell, and it was on behalf of this grandson—as

well as of Murrough O'Flahertie, her second son—that Grainne went to petition Queen Elizabeth in person in 1593.

It is likely, upon the death of her father, but still more upon the death of her husband, Donnell O'Flahertie, that Grainne was hard set to maintain her position as chief of the O'Malleys. The English laws of her time gave neither power nor inheritance to women, and although by Brehon law, a chief held his position by election, it is evident that Grainne governed her sept, her territory, and her fleet, by right of might. The story of her second matrimonial venture is astonishing, but characteristic. It brought her into Mayo, and gave her possession of her most celebrated stronghold—Carrigahooly Castle—"the Rock of the Secret Place"—which stands in a commanding position at the turn of a land-locked estuary, near the present town of Newport.

Grainne's second husband was Sir Richard Bourke, known also as the MacWilliam Oughter or "Lower"—that is, the head of the "Lower" Bourkes, or de Burghos, the head of the "Upper" Bourkes, being his kinsman, the Earl of Clanrickarde. The MacWilliam Oughter was nicknamed "Richard in Iron," either from his temperament, or from his custom of always appearing in armour. The *Four Masters* describe him as "a plundering, warlike, unjust, and rebellious man." But "Richard in Iron," being of Anglo-Norman descent, ostensibly at least, acknowledged the English rule, although we are told he "could speak Latin, but no English." The union was, no doubt, politically necessary for Grainne.

It is said that the marriage was arranged to last for one year, and if, at the end of that period either said to the

other :—"I dismiss you!" the union was to be dissolved. During the year, Grainne took care to put her O'Malleys as garrisons into all MacWilliam Oughter's coastward castles valuable to her. One fine day, as the Lord of the Lower Bourkes—or Mayo, as their territory is now called—was coming up to Grainne's newly fortified Castle of Carrigahooly, Grainne saw him, and quickly cried out the dissolving words—"I dismiss you!" since he had served her turn.

This story probably arose from Grainne's independent position as chief of the O'Malleys, for we know that she bore three sons and a daughter to Sir Richard Bourke.

MacWilliam Oughter made his submission to Lord Deputy Sydney in 1575, in the town of Galway, "together with O'Mayly, and other chiefs," and recovered his territories about Castlebar.

In 1575, however, Lord Deputy Sydney wrote to Queen Elizabeth and the Council in London that "Grace O'Mayly was powerful in galleys and in seamen," and that her fleet was "a terror to all merchantmen who sailed the Atlantic." "The Queen of the West" had become powerful enough to attract Elizabeth's attention. Grainne was proclaimed, and a reward of £500—a great sum in those days—was offered for her apprehension. Grainne hastened to reply in justification of what she called her "thrade of maintenance." She alleged that by it she "did maintain herself and her people, by sea and land," for whom she "had no other provision."

Writing to the Council again in 1576, Sydney describes his visit to Galway, and describes also, Grainne herself.

"There came to me a most famous femynyne sea Captain, called Grace I Mallye, and offered her services

unto me, wheresoever I would command her, with three galleys, and two hundred fighting men, either in Ireland, or in Scotland. She brought with her her husband, for she was, as well by sea, as land, more than master's mate with him. He was of the nether Bourke's, and now, as I hear, MacWilliam Oughter, and called by the nickname of 'Richard-in-Iron.' This was a notorious woman in all the coasts of Ireland. This woman did Sir Philip see, and speak with, he can more at large inform you of her."

It would seem that, subsequently, Grainne was captured, and, for a time, imprisoned, for we find that, in 1582, she was free—"and thinketh herself no small lady." In 1583, she was levying war, and in 1586, she was again arrested, and nearly hanged. In 1590, she raided the Le Stranges in Arran. Grainne's piracies became notorious. Not Spanish galleons of wine alone, but vessels of Bristol merchants, nay, of the English Government itself, became her prey. Yet, in 1593, Grainne O'Malley was able to report that she had received Her Majesty's gracious pardon, and "ever since dwelleth in Connacht a farmer's life, very poor, bearing cess, and, paying Her Majesty's composition rent, did utterly give over her former trade of maintenance by sea and land." The traditional story of how all this came about—traditional only because there is no direct record of the interview in the English State Papers, although the bards and Irish historians have recorded even its details—is one of the most picturesque in Irish history.

After the risings in 1586, Grainne's difficulties, both on sea and land, increased. As time went on, for the good of her clan, and for reasons connected with her feudal authority, as well as on behalf of her O'Flahertie

son and grandson, Grainne thought it well to make a definite peace with the English Queen herself. She was prepared to ally herself with England, but not to submit, or to give up one tittle of her dignity. The politic Elizabeth, it is said, invited the chief of the O'Malley's to plead her cause in person, and, in 1593, the "Dark Lady of Doona," as Grainne was often called, decided to accept the Queen's invitation.

One tradition tells that Grainne sailed up the Thames to the Tower Gate, but it seems more probable that she set sail from her western stronghold in Clare Island, and landed at Chester. During the long, rough journey from the coasts of Mayo to England, the sea-wife brought forth "Dick-in-Iron's" son, who was known as Toberduagh-na-Long—Theobald, or Toby, "of the Ships."

In an old MS. in the Royal Irish Academy, there is an account of the birth of Grainne's first-born son, Owen O'Flahertie, who met his death at the treacherous hands of Bingham. It says:—"It is Transcended to us by Tradition that the very Day she was brought to bed of her first Child that a Turkish Corsair attacked her ships, and that they were Getting the Better of her Men. She got up, put the Quilt about her, and a string about her neck, took two Blunder Bushes in her hands, came on deck . . . capering about. Her monstrous size, and odd figure surprised the Turks. Their officers gathered together, talking of her. This was what she wanted. She stretched both her hands, fired the two Blunder Bushes at them, and destroyed the officers."

The birth of "Toby of the Ships" was probably under more peaceable conditions than these, but it is evident that even maternal cares were not allowed to divert this

chieftain of the mariner O'Malleys from the duties, and the guardianship, of her little sea-washed state.

In due time Grainne reached London, and presented herself before the Queen, recommended by the letters of the Lord Deputy. The scene has been vividly described in verse from details in the old accounts.

"A stately hall—lofty and carved the roof—
Was decked with silken banners fair to see.
The hangings, velvet, from Genoa's woof,
And wrought with Tudor roses, curiously.
At its far end did stand a canopy
Shading a chair of state, on which was seen
A ladye fair, whose look of majesty
Amid a throng all clad in costly sheen—
Nobles and gallant Knights—proclaimed her England's Queen.

. . . . . .

"A Tucket sounds, and lo! there enters now
A stranger group, in saffron tunics dressed.
A female at their head, whose step and brow
Heralds her rank; and calm, and self-possessed
Onward she came, alone, through England's best,
With careless look, and bearing free, yet high,
Tho' gentle dames, their titterings scarce repressed,
Noting her garments as she passed them by.
None laughed again who met that stern and flashing eye.

"Restless and dark, its sharp and rapid look
Showed a fierce spirit, prone a wrong to feel,
And quicker to revenge it. As a book
That sun-burnt brow did fearless thoughts reveal;
And in her girdle was a skeyne of steel;

Her crimson mantle a gold broach did bind;
Her flowing garments reached unto her heel;
Her hair—part fell in tresses unconfined,
And part a silver bodkin did fasten up behind.

"'Twas not her garb that caught the gazer's eye—
Tho' strange, 'twas rich, and, in its fashion, good—
But the wild grandeur of her mein, erect and high,
Before the English Queen she, dauntless, stood,
And none her bearing there could scorn as rude.
She seemed as one well used to power—one that hath
Dominion over men of savage mood,
And dared the tempest in its midnight wrath,
And through opposing billows cleft her fearless path."

. . . . . .

Then Grainne speaks to the glittering Queen: —

"'Queen of the Saxons! From the distant West
I come! From Achill steep, and Innish Clare
Where the wild eagle builds, mid clouds, his nest,
And ocean flings its billows in the air.
I come to greet you in your dwelling fair,
Led by your fame. Lone, sitting in my cave
In sea-beat Doona, it hath reached me there,
Theme of the minstrel's song. And then I gave
My galley to the wind, and crossed the dark green wave.

"'Health to the Ladye! Let your answer be
Health to our Irish land; for evil men
Do vex her sorely, and have bucklared thee
Abbettor of their deeds—a lying train
That cheat their mistress for the love of gain
And wrong their trust. Aught else I little reek!
Alike to me the mountain, and the glen,
The castle's rampart, or the galley's deck;
But thou my country spare! Thy foot is on her neck!'

"Thus spoke out, brief and bold, that lady stern,
And all stood silent through that crowded hall,
While proudly glared each wild and savage kern
Attendant on their mistress. Then, courtly all,
Elizabeth replies, and soothing fall
Her words; and, pleasing to the Irish ear,
Fair promises that she would soon recall
Her evil servants. Were those words sincere—
That promise kept? Let Erin answer—with a tear!"

Grainne's reception at Court appears to have been accompanied with circumstances of pomp and honour. She herself approached the throne on which sat the greatest Queen that ever governed England's destinies, surrounded by wise statesmen, courtiers, and ladies decked in the rich and glittering attire of that day, clad in the simple dress of her native land. She wore a saffron dyed bodice and petticoat, her dark hair was gathered up on to the crown of her head, and held with a silver pin. Her long chieftain's cloak was thrown over her head and shoulders, leaving her breast bare. Small wonder the strange, simple dress provoked titterings among the minds cast in a smaller mould. There is a story that one of the ladies-in-waiting, seeing "the Dark Lady of Doona" was not provided with that sophisticated adjunct of dress, a pocket-handkerchief, presented one to Grainne. The chief of the O'Malleys, having thanked her, and used it once, immediately threw it upon the fire. An interpreter, thereupon, explained to her that it was customary in England to retain it in the pocket, until it was again required. Grainne indignantly suspected the sincerity of her adviser. She said that the more cleanly habits of her country forbade such a disgusting practice,

and she doubtless quoted the satirical old Irish proverb that "What the Englishman puts in his pocket, the Irishman throws away!"

Probably Elizabeth never intended personal injury to this singular and interesting woman, and only required her formal submission. It is said that "the reception of Granauaile by the Queen was most gracious." On parting, Elizabeth offered to create Grainne a Countess. But "the Queen of the West" refused this honour. She proudly told Elizabeth that she already regarded herself as the Queen of England's equal in rank. She was, however, willing to accept—as a friendly gift from a sister sovereign—an Earldom for her baby son, Toby—from whom—accordingly—are descended the Earls of Mayo to the present time.

Grainne returned to her own people, in due course, and, on her homeward way, anchored her ship in the roads of "Dalkeye, ye Porte of Dublin." One day Grainne sailed across the silver bay of Dublin to the Castle at Howth, the stronghold of the St. Laurences', to seek the hospitality of its lord. She was unexpected, and the family and retainers being at dinner, Granauaile found the Castle gates shut and barred. Unaccustomed to brook delay, and disgusted at a habit so contrary to Irish custom, the rebuffed chieftain of the O'Malleys took swift revenge. She went to a cottage near the beach, where she knew that the infant heir to the St. Laurence's was at nurse, according to the national custom of fosterage. She seized the child, carried him on board her galley, and then at once set sail for her western isles. She took the boy to her O'Flahertie "Castle of the Hen," on an arm of Lough Corrib, and there kept him, until she extracted

from the Lord of Howth not only a ransom, but a promise for himself and his descendants that the gates of Howth Castle should always be thrown open when the St. Laurence family sat down to dinner, a ceremony observed until recent times.

Possibly, this abduction of the heir of the St. Laurences —a curious old picture of which existed, and may still exist, in Howth Castle—was the last of Granauaile's piracies. One wonders how "a farmer's life," and the tax-paying, suited that sea-wife, who loved the lash of the salt spray on her face, as she guided her galleys through "the Bays of the Sea." But, at least, she had freed herself from the power of the betrayer. There was no longer the need of sleeping—as she had always slept during the limit of her proclamation—with a cable coiled round her bed post, which, passing out through an aperture made in the sea wall of her Castle of Carrignahooly, was fastened first to her galley, and so to her entire fleet, which were always moored tied together in the harbour beneath, prepared and ready for any sudden surprise or attack.

Granauaile was a remarkable product of a remarkable age. Many of the stories of this singular woman seem to show her in a rude, and somewhat unlovely, light. She was a notorious pirate, but such men as Drake, Gilbert, and Raleigh were little, if any, better. She was a ruler greatly beloved by her clan, and trusted by her seamen, firm, prompt, brave, far-seeing, possessed of an intense shrewdness, and an overwhelming ability. Her statesmanship and sound judgment were equally remarkable in her time, and in her sex.

The O'Malleys, as a family, were ever distinguished

by their strong piety and devotion to the Old Faith. Murrisk Abbey, on the mainland, at the foot of Croagh Patrick, was founded by them, and in Murrisk a long line of O'Malley chiefs were buried. Grainne was no exception. She, too, was distinguished by a vigorous piety. As well as being devout, Grainne appears to have been an eminently virtuous woman. She was ever a promoter of early marriages among her clan, over which she watched with a mother's keen and loving eye. She also built and endowed the monastery on Clare Island, in which tradition declares her to have been buried. For many years her skull was shown to curious visitors bedecked with parti-coloured ribbons.

Her bones, it may be, have been scattered by those western winds which she conquered, or circumvented, in her active and vigorous life, but her "spirit is still at home." Loving Ireland as she did, her very name held power in after years, until it came to mean Ireland herself, the Woman Land, the Mother, beloved, even when distant, the "Poor Old Woman," who was at the same time—a Queen. The spirit of "the Dark Lady of Doona" seems still to hover over every crag crowned by those many castles of hers, which still re-echo her name and memory—a memory which Irish men and women may recall with pride.

CHAPTER XIII.

NUALA O'DONNELL.—"THE WOMAN OF THE PIERCING WAIL."

"O! Woman of the Piercing Wail,
Who mournest o'er yon mound of clay
With sigh and groan,
Would God thou wert among the Gael!
Thou would'st not then from day to day
Weep thus alone."

These are the opening lines of James Clarence Mangan's well known translation of the *Lament of the Princes of Tyrone and Tyrconnel*. It was written by the Bard of the O'Donnells, Owen Roe Mac an Bhaird (Ward). "The Woman of the Piercing Wail" was Nuala O'Donnell. Seeing her "keening" over the tomb of her brother, her nephews, and her kinsman, in distant Rome, MacWard addresses to Nuala his beautiful elegy :—

"Two Princes of the line of Conn
Sleep in their cells of clay beside O'Donnell Roe;
Three Royal youths alas! are gone
Who lived for Erin's weal, but died for Erin's woe!"

These Princes of Tyrone and Tyrconnel—the great Hugh O'Neil and his eldest son, Rory O'Donnell, with his brother, Cathair—sleep side by side, far away from green Tyrconnel, in St. Peter's in Montorio, on the Janiculum.

Tradition tells that on this spot St. Peter was crucified. The Church was built about 1500, by order of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, for Spanish Franciscans. For its altar-pieces Raphael painted his "Transfiguration."

These Northern Princes, or Earls—The O'Neil and The O'Donnell—were men who loomed large in their country's story. Their departure from Ireland in 1607—known as "The Flight of the Earls"—is perhaps the saddest landmark in Irish history. The O'Donnell's devoted sister, Nuala, followed them into their disastrous exile. Their bard, MacWard, was also with them.

Nuala and her brother Rory were the grandchildren of that Manus O'Donnell already referred to as the treacherous husband of Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald, whom she left, with scant apology, when he failed to protect her nephew Gerald, afterwards eleventh Earl of Kildare. Their parents were Hugh MacManus, and Ineen Duv [Dark Ineen] daughter of James MacDonnell of Cantire, Lord of the Isles.

The O'Neils were regarded as Provincial Princes of Ulster, but the O'Donnells claimed perfect equality and independence. They never paid tribute to the O'Neils. There is a story that the O'Neil once sent the O'Donnell this laconic message:—"Send me some tribute, or else——!" To which the O'Donnell replied:—"I owe you no tribute, and if——!" When Norman Knights—the De Burghos, and the De Courcys—conquered eastern Ulster, now Down and Antrim, the O'Neils and the O'Donnells still maintained their authority over Tyrone and Donegal. Sometimes they were allied, at other times at variance. The O'Neils stood for nationality. They ever opposed English rule. Calvagh O'Donnell, and his

father Manus, had "made peace and amity" with the Lord Deputy, and Calvagh was regarded as representing the "English party."

On Calvagh's death, his brother Hugh's succession was disputed. Calvagh had sons, legitimate and illegitimate. But his legitimate son was a child, and, at that time, was a prisoner of the O'Neils. When Hugh MacManus succeeded in establishing himself as The O'Donnell, it was regarded as a triumph for the national party. His wife also—the fierce and relentless Dark Ineen—ever threw all her great influence into the scale in favour of the party of the O'Neils.

The eldest son of Hugh and Ineen, born in 1571, was the famous Red Hugh O'Donnell. The true son of his mother, his life was spent in a long conflict—all but successful—against the rule of Elizabeth, whom the Irish refused to acknowledge as their Sovereign, or to regard as the lawful successor of Henry VIII. "The Dauntless Red Hugh" was not the greatest Irish general, but he was the boldest, the bravest, the most knightly of Irish leaders. No national hero holds a higher place in popular affection. He hated the Saxon, but not without good cause. When a boy of fourteen he had been kidnapped, and carried to close imprisonment as a hostage in Dublin Castle for many weary years. Twice he attempted to escape. On the second attempt, by the aid of Hugh, The O'Neil, he succeeded. Art O'Neil, Hugh's younger brother, who was also a hostage prisoner, succumbed to the cold, but Hugh O'Donnell, and another O'Neil succeeded, after terrible hardships and exposure in the Wicklow Mountains, in reaching the north once more. When the young man had somewhat recovered, his father, Hugh

MacManus, now growing old, inaugurated him in his stead at Killmacrenan as The O'Donnell, Lord of Tyrconnel. This was in 1592. The O'Donnells welcomed the young Hugh Roe as their Chief. They called him "The Eagle of the North," and flocked to his standard. But there was one O'Donnell who took Hugh's inauguration ill.

Hugh Roe had a cousin, two years older than himself —Nial Garve O'Donnell. This Nial was the grandson of Calvagh, Hugh MacManus's elder brother. He certainly represented the elder branch of the O'Donnells, and he regarded himself as the rightful Lord of Tyrconnel. Brehon law, however, did not recognise the Norman principal of primogeniture. Chieftains were always elected. This fact should be constantly remembered in considering the family feuds of earlier Irish history. Nial Garve came to his cousin Hugh's first hosting, but he came "not through love, but through fear." There was ever bitterness and envy between these two in the future. Before long, Nial Garve was plotting with the English Government against his cousin.

Likely enough, it was at Red Hugh's hosting, to which Nial came "not through love, but through fear," that he met Red Hugh's sister, Nuala. At any rate, a marriage between the cousins was arranged. It was the kind of marriage common enough, in Irish Annals, made for the purpose of uniting rivals—a purpose, it may be added, which was seldom or ever accomplished. Nial Garve is described by O'Cleary in *The Annals of the Four Masters* as "a violent man, brave, hasty, austere, spiteful, vindictive, with the venom of a serpent, and the impetuosity of a lion." It was not a list of qualities likely to make an attractive husband. Of Nuala we have

no description, but we can picture Ineen Duv's daughter as passionately devoted to her country, and to her religion, intensely proud of her noble house, and deeply attached to her brothers, Rory and Cathair. She, as they, must have been impetuous, and full of daring. We may also picture her as reluctant to leave the family roof, even for her cousin Nial's not far distant Castle of Lifford, which was soon to be wrested from him by her brother, Hugh Roe.

Hugh Roe now allied himself to Hugh O'Neil. For ten years, from 1592 to 1602, the two Hughs maintained a war against the government of Elizabeth which is the most glorious, but also the most disastrous, in Ireland's history. Hugh O'Neil was an older man than Hugh O'Donnell, and a far greater general. Henry IV. of France declared that O'Neil was the second soldier of the age—he being the first. He had been trained in his youth in England, and knew the ways of Courts. Elizabeth had created him Earl of Tyrone, instead of "The O'Neil," by way of attaching him to her service. But on his return to his own country, Hugh resumed his old title, and lived the life of an independent Chieftain. He took the field with O'Donnell against England. He defeated Bagenel (whose sister he carried off and married) at the Yellow Ford near Armagh, and proved that no English general could keep the field against him were the terms equal. Until the fatal day of Kinsale, the careers of O'Neil and O'Donnell were careers of almost unbroken victory. Queen Elizabeth's Earl of Essex was sent to Ireland to subdue O'Neil, but Ireland, instead, proved the grave of the favourite's reputation. O'Neil was too strong for Essex. The two Hughs had, for a time, united all Ireland.

After the recall and fall of the favourite, Essex, Mountjoy, the new Lord Deputy, who was wise and crafty, adopted the often tried, and all too successful plan, of dividing in order to govern. Mountjoy began to plot, as well as to fight. In Nial Garve O'Donnell he found a tool ready to his hand. Down in the South, Carew, the Lord President of Munster, followed the same plan. It was by means of a lying letter and false information, that "the Great Earl of Desmond"—mentioned in the previous account of Cathelyn Fitzgerald—was captured, and sent to the Tower. War, devastation, and subsequent famine, swept the South. Only in the North was there still hope. But even The O'Neil and The O'Donnell could not cope with the wiles and the policy of devastation of Mountjoy and Carew. Their people were starving, without corn, or meat, and strong action was imperative. O'Neil called upon Spain for aid.

Spain sent aid—inadequate, dilatory aid. A few ships and a Spanish commander, Don Juan Del Aquila, arrived at Kinsale. Tyrone and Tyrconnel were slow to leave the North, but the Spaniard threatened to withdraw otherwise. At last, the two Hughs determined to risk all, and to join Del Aquila. Carew and Mountjoy were already besieging Kinsale. The combined Irish army attacked the English, but the luck was against them. O'Donnell had not succeeded in time in joining with O'Neil and Del Aquila. Worse still, there were fatal jealousies and dissensions. The Battle of Kinsale was lost in 1602. On that fatal field the cause of Ireland received its death-blow. How different might have been Ireland's history had not a series of sad coincidents broken for ever the power of the Irish hereditary rulers, and brought about

the attempt to "make Ireland English," which resulted in the Plantation of Ulster.

All this time, Nial Garve had been busy. During his cousin's absence from Tyrconnel, he took the opportunity to seize Donegal Abbey—the great Franciscan foundation, and burial place of the O'Donnells—and he fortified it. In its desecrated ruins, a little later, the *Four Masters* sat down—on January 22nd, 1632—to preserve their *Annals,* and to write, with toil and care, the great work which rescued, before it was too late, the history of their country from oblivion.

The defeat at Kinsale broke Hugh Roe O'Donnell's heart. "He did not sleep nor rest for three days and three nights after." He was indignant at the Irish failure, and disgusted with Del Aquila's conduct. He decided to transfer his authority to his brother Rory, and to sail for Spain to lay the whole matter before King Philip. He left Kinsale on January 6th, 1602, and never saw Ireland again. In the following September he met his death by poison at the hand of one James Blake, an Irish traitor, bribed by Carew. He died childless. A royal funeral in St. Francis' monastery—not by the broad blue Bay of Donegal, but in Valladolid—was all that was left for the King of Spain to offer him.

After Kinsale Nial Garve asked for his reward from England. Nial claimed to have fought for the English in the Battle of Kinsale, and to have "had many of his men slaine, among the reste a brother of his own." He opened his mouth wide—too wide for a subject. He demanded the position of The O'Donnell, and caused himself to be inaugurated at Killmacrenan, as his cousin Hugh had been ten years before. Was Nuala at this

inauguration also? We may be almost certain that she was not.

Hugh Roe had left his brother Rory in his place as Lord of Tyrconnel. Rory and Nial were soon at war. Mountjoy, before long, took an opportunity to arrest Nial Garve on a charge of treason. But he was allowed to go to London "to solicit pardon for his offences, and rewards for his service and aid to the Crown of England." Upon this, to London went Rory also.

The Privy Council in London decided in Rory's favour. He was created Earl of Tyrconnel, and kissed the hand of James I. at Hampton Court. He then returned to rule his own people in Tyrconnel. Nial Garve returned, also, not altogether unrewarded, yet still dissatisfied. But Rory's position was one which could no longer be held. Friction with the English government was inevitable. Perhaps the day had gone by for the rule of Clan Chieftains in Ireland. Besides this, Rory was in difficulties for money. The *Four Masters*—his admirers—wrote of him as "a generous, bounteous, munificent, and truly hospitable lord, to whom the patrimony of his ancestors did not seem anything for his spending and feasting parties." Nial Garve, too, was making more mischief.

Rory had married Lady Brigit Fitzgerald, a daughter of the Earl of Kildare. It was in the garden of Maynooth, her home, at Christmas time, 1606, that Rory confided his wrongs to Richard Nugent, Lord Delvin, afterwards first Earl of Westmeath. Having heard Delvin's own pretended grievances, Rory confided to him his plan to siege Dublin Castle, and capture the Lord Deputy and Council in it. "Then," said the O'Donnell, "out of

them I shall have my lands, and my country as I desire it!"

More besides was done and said. O'Neil set out a long list of his grievances, which were, undoubtedly great. Lord Deputy Chichester provoked, and had recourse to informers. There may have been a widespread plot, in which The O'Neil, and The O'Donnell, the Maguires, and many besides, even Spain and Rome, were concerned. The English Government held this to be the case. Tyrone and Tyrconnel were commanded to go to England to answer the charges against them. But Hugh O'Neil was warned by his son Henry from Brussels not to obey. If they went to London, all was lost. They would certainly be imprisoned in the Tower, and likely enough executed at Tyburn. A ship from Brussels was sent, by means of Maguire of Fermanagh, to Rathmullen to enable them to escape to Spain.

Rightly, or wrongly, the Earls decided to fly. Their action suggests frightened innocence, rather than premeditated rebellion. They hurried to Rathmullen, on Lough Swilly, and there, on September 4th (old style), 1607, they embarked for Spain. Ninety persons embarked with them in the little craft of eighty tons. There was Nuala O'Donnell, who took with her her little daughter Grania O'Donnell, Cathair, Rory's brother, with his wife Rose O'Dougherty, and their little boy. There was also Rory's year old son, Hugh. Lady Brigit was not with her husband. James I. remarked later, when he saw Rory's wife, that "he wondered how Tyrconnel could leave so fair a face behind." Her husband did indeed try to communicate with her from Rome, but he never saw her "fair face" again. She soon consoled

herself, after Rory's death, with Barnwell, Viscount Kingsland.

Nuala had forsaken her traitorous husband Nial Garve when he openly joined the English against her brothers. More sadly did she forsake her son Naughton (called in State documents Hector), who is described as "a boy of active spirit, yet much inclined to his book," and who, after years spent either as a hostage, or prisoner, or both, ended his life in the Tower.

Here the end of Nial Garve may be told. The Flight of the Earls restored his hopes of obtaining the Lordship of the O'Donnells. But he reckoned without the mother of Rory and Nuala. Ineen Duv was still alive, still powerful, and dangerous. She charged Nial with being the instigator of the rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Dougherty in 1608. Through her informations and machinations, Nial Garve found himself called upon to stand his trial in Dublin for treason. For more than a year his trial, and that of his brothers, hung on, while they, and he, and Naughton, were kept prisoners. They attempted to escape, and after this—in October, 1699—Nial and Naughton were sent to England, and thrown into the Tower. In the Tower, seventeen years later, Nial Garve died. Surely never did man turn traitor for less reward! Truly, he was "an unfortunate and badly-used man," for all that he had done more than his share to accomplish the ruin of his family.

It was midnight, on September 4th, 1607, when Nuala, and the rest, left their native land. The *Four Masters* described the emigrants as the "most illustrious party that the winds ever wafted away from the shores of Ireland." "Woe to the heart that meditated, woe to the mind that

conceived, woe to the council that decided on the project of their setting out on this voyage, without knowing that they should ever return to their native principalities or patrimonies, to the end of the world!" The ship, with its noble cargo, escaped English interception, but encountered terrible storms. For fourteen days she was buffeted too and fro, and sent out of her course, until, drenched, starved, and thirsty, the wretched crew were forced to shelter in the estuary of the Seine. But they were soon obliged to travel on. The English Ambassador demanded that the King of France should have them sent to London. "France is a free country," answered Henry IV. "No guest of France shall be molested, least of all those driven from their homes for their religion." Nevertheless, he intimated to the exiles that the sooner they left his dominions the better. Wearily, they went on to Amiens, to Arras, and to Douay, where the Irish seminarists gave them a welcome, and thence to Brussels, where they were received with marks of high esteem. From Brussels they went to the welcome shelter of Louvain. Here they found Henry O'Neil, Tyrone's son, in command of a Spanish regiment, and Florence Conry, the titular Archbishop of Tuam, who had been with Hugh Roe O'Donnell in Spain, and when he died. The toil-worn women found rest here among many Irish friends.

Spain was the exiles' goal, but James I.'s Ambassadors closed this country to them also. Finally, at the invitation of Pope Paul V., they decided to cross the Alps, and take refuge in Rome. Some of the ladies and children lingered on at Louvain, where Tyrone's wife died, but twenty-one of the party struggled across the St. Gothard Pass in the snows of February, 1608.

Pope Paul V. received the Earls with honour, and relieved their necessities. They took places befitting their rank at the Papal Court, and on the Festival of Corpus Christi, Tyrone and Tyrconnel held the Canopy over the Pope's head. But their sorrows, and past perils, ill fitted these Northern eagles to resist the atmosphere of a Roman summer. In June Rory sickened with Roman fever. Poison was suspected, and not without reason, since poison had been used already for many of the family. Ostia was tried for better air, but on July 28th, 1608, Nuala's much loved brother died, tended at the last by those loving women who had clung to the fugitives through their flight and exile. Three months later, Cathair, only twenty-five years of age, was taken by death from his wife Rose, and their little son. Just twelve months later, in the next Roman summer, young Hugh O'Neil, aged twenty-four, eldest son of the great Hugh of Tyrone, was carried up to St. Peter's on the Janiculum, and laid before the high altar, beside his cousins, in the Franciscan habit, which is the winding-sheet of the O'Donnells.

England was glad at this solution of a difficult problem. True, Hugh O'Neil still lived, but he was now more to be pitied than feared. He was over seventy years of age, and growing blind. He hoped still for Spanish aid, but, in 1615, he fell ill, and on the 20th of July, 1616, he too was laid beside his son in a grave far from the fair land of his birth, and of his heart's devotion.

The Earls had been attainted, and outlawed after their flight, and their lands were confiscated. The rising of Sir Cahir O'Dougherty in 1608, and the arrest of Nial Garve, smoothed the way of English statesmen deter-

mined upon the Settlement, or Plantation, of Ulster. The old spots were to know the O'Donnells as Lords no more. They were gone. The old order had changed. A turning-point in Ireland's history had been reached. Ulster was declared forfeit to the English Crown.

Well might the Bard say to Nuala :—

"Look not, nor sigh, for earthly throne,
Nor place thy trust in arm of clay,
But on thy knees
Uplift thy soul to God alone.
For all things go their destined way
As He decrees.

"And Thou, O Mighty Lord! whose ways
Are far above our feeble minds
To understand,
Sustain us in these doleful days,
And render light the chain that binds
Our fallen land!"

There was no more left for Nuala to pray for. She had lost all—her beloved brothers and nephews—her cousins the O'Neils—her son, as well as his treacherous father. Her black figure prone upon the Irish graves on St. Peter's Hill spells unmitigated despair, until we remember that

"We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

For a while, "the fallen land" slept. But Eirinn was not dead. Dawn comes after the longest night.

After the death of her brothers and nephews, Nuala went back to Brussels, with her little daughter Grania. She was there in 1613. Four years later, when Nial Garve was wearing out his life in the Tower, Grania O'Donnell, now a woman grown, came to England to petition that some provision might be made for her out of her father's forfeited estates. We do not know how far her petition was granted. Then the mists of time again close on the lives of these much-tried women of the O'Donnell's, Nuala and Grania, and the picture remains of the "Woman who seeks a grave," far from the Land of her heart's desire, in the Eternal City.

CHAPTER XIV.

HONORA DE BURGH.—WIFE OF PATRICK SARSFIELD, EARL OF LUCAN.

The claim of beautiful Honora de Burgh to remembrance rests on the fact that she was the wife of a patriot and a hero. She is a charming, but shadowy figure, graceful, sprightly, fragile, and not a little forlorn, for all her exalted position at the time of her death. That critical French writer, St. Simon, says that she was :—Une très aimable femme, belle, touchante, et faite a peindre, et qui réussit fort bien a le cour de St. Germains" — "a very charming woman, beautiful, striking, handsome as a picture, who succeeded extremely well at the Court of St. Germains." Her brief life was interwoven with the Stuart fortunes. She died actually a member, by her second marriage, of that ill-fated House.

Honora was the daughter of William de Burgh (Burke), seventh Earl of Clanrickarde, and of his second wife, Helen, the daughter of Donough, first Earl of Clancarty. She was born about the time of the restoration of Charles II., in days when Ireland's state was sad.

Confiscations of the rebels' lands had followed each Irish rebellion. Accordingly, when Charles II. was restored, the Irish, then numbering a million or more, and all belonging to the Old Faith, were governed by, perhaps, 200,000, or less, English, or Scotch, Protestant settlers. These settlers exercised all the power and influence in Ireland. The native Irish nobles, when not openly

rebellious and Catholic, only conformed nominally. These settlers—old Cromwellians and Ulstermen, for the most part—offered the crown of Ireland to Charles II. on condition that the lands they then held should be secured to them. This Charles II. granted by the Act of Settlement. But it was only natural that the native Irish nobles and gentry who had supported the Stuarts against the Commonwealth, and suffered severely for their loyalty, should be loud in their complaints, and that widespread dissatisfaction should prevail among them. Honora's father, in his distant province of Clare, was one of the aggrieved nobles.

Honora was one of a large family. Her father's first wife was an Englishwoman—Lettice, daughter of Sir Henry Shirley of Astwell. She died, leaving two sons, who grew up to be Jacobites—Richard, Lord Dunkellin, and John, who was created Lord Bophin by King James when he landed in Ireland in 1689. This John was taken prisoner, at the head of his regiment, on the blood-soaked field of Aughrim in 1691. He was outlawed, but, in the reign of Queen Anne, when the Stuart cause was altogether lost, his children recovered the Clanrickarde estates, having become Protestants. One of Honora's own brothers—the gallant young Ulick—fell, in the flower of his youth, fighting, full of courage, under Honora's husband, Sarsfield, upon that same fatal field of Aughrim. Perhaps fewer regrets were needed for him than for his elder half-brother, John.

Honora had grown to womanhood when James II. succeeded his brother Charles II. in 1685. By that time, few Irish nobles were staunch to England. But since James was known to belong to the Catholic Faith, Stuart

loyalty somewhat revived. James placed dependence upon his Irish army. At the head of it he appointed an old friend of his exile, an Irishman, descended from the House of Shrewsbury, Richard Talbot, whom he raised to the peerage as Earl of Tyrconnel.

Serving under Tyrconnel was a far finer Anglo-Irishman—one "more Irish than the Irish"—Colonel Patrick Sarsfield. His mother was of noble Irish family, being Anne O'Moore, daughter of the famous Rory O'Mor, "of the Hills." He was firmly attached to the Old Religion. Macauley states that he was one of the wealthiest Roman Catholics in Ireland, having inherited an estate of £2,000 a year. "His knowledge of Courts and Camps was such as few of his countrymen possessed. He had borne a commission in the English Life Guards. He had lived about the Court at Whitehall, and had fought bravely under Monmouth on the Continent, and against Monmouth, when he rebelled against James II., and was defeated at Sedgemoor. He had more personal influence than any man in Ireland, and was a gentleman of eminent merit, brave, upright, honourable, careful of his men in quarters, and certain always to be found at their head in the day of battle. His intrepidity, his frankness, his boundless good-nature, his great stature, which far exceeded that of ordinary men, and the strength which he exerted in personal conflict, gained for him the affectionate admiration of the populace." Such a man was Patrick Sarsfield—"Ireland's Wonder"—Honora de Burgh's first husband.

The birth of a Prince of Wales—known afterwards as "The Old Pretender"—on June 10th, 1688, brought about the expulsion of the infant's father, James II., from

the English Throne. James II., or his religious opinions, had never been popular in England, but James was elderly, and his daughters—Protestant princesses—were his heirs. The birth of a prince altered the complexion of affairs. At the request of a large number of English people, who dreaded a Catholic Monarchy, William, Prince of Orange came to England, and with his wife, the Princess Mary, assumed the Crown of England. Mary's father abdicated, and escaped with his second wife, Mary Beatrice of Modena, and their infant son, to the Court of France, and the protection of Louis XIV.

Possibly, Honora may have joined the English exiles in France before the Battle of the Boyne. Her uncle, Justin McCarthy, created Viscount Mountcashell, was the first leader of the Irish Brigade in France. But wherever she was, it is certain that Sarsfield's wife and babes could have seen but little of the soldier husband and father in those days. Sarsfield, we know, was at St. Germains during those months between the flight of James from England in December, 1688, and his sailing for Ireland from Brest in March, 1689, for his name is given in the list of those who sailed with His Majesty. Patrick Sarsfield sailed in the "Duc." His brother, apparently, sailed in the "Courageux." Eighty-three persons of rank sailed, in eleven vessels, from Brest, and landed at Kinsale.

James II. refused the offer of a French Army, being assured by Tyrconnel that of men he had no lack, but he readily accepted from Louis XIV. much needed money, ammunition and equipages. Louis even presented James with his own sword and cuirass, and, embracing him affectionately on leave-taking, said :—"I hope never

to see you again, but if Fortune decrees that we are to meet, you will find me the same as you have ever found me." James travelled to Brest in his own coach, having beside him his son, James FitzJames, Duke of Berwick. This young man was at this time a promising soldier of twenty-nine, and a great favourite with his father. He was born in 1670, and was the son of Arabella Churchill, with whom James had been all too intimate when he was Duke of York previous to his marriage with Queen Mary Beatrice. Arabella was sister to John Churchill, afterwards celebrated as the great Duke of Marlborough. Berwick, accordingly, was Marlborough's nephew, and he shared his uncle's splendid military ability. But he was without Marlborough's avarice. "No money could buy the raising of Berwick's little finger," wrote Bolingbroke, his contemporary and friend. "No motive of interest could tempt him from the law he had proscribed to himself. From his father he inherited a dogged determination to act according to his conscience and duty, no matter how private affection might pull at his heart. He was scrupulously just, perfectly truthful, humane, generous, yet frugal, gentle, tolerant in religion, though most devout. Like his royal grandfather, he was the most loyal of sons, the best of fathers, the most tender of husbands, the most sincere of friends, the most considerate of masters, the most faithful of subjects."

For all this, as we shall see later, "the most loyal of sons" did not subdue his "private affections" in the case of Honora Sarsfield.

Berwick was of a handsome presence, and resembled his uncle, Charles II. Montesquieu thus describes him:—"Avec un figure noble, sa taille advantageuse,

son air froid et serieux lui donnoient encore un air severe, qui inspiroit le respect, et même un espace de crainte, a eux qui aboraoient."

James entered Dublin in triumph on March 14th, 1689. The Irish received him, at first, with enthusiasm—at last they had a King of their own. But James had no love for the Irish, nor for Ireland. He regarded it merely as a stepping-stone to England. He summoned "the Patriot Parliament" indeed, but his eyes were fixed upon Whitehall and Westminster.

To this Parliament came Honora's brother, now Earl of Clanrickarde, and a special Act was passed by it to secure to him his rightful estates, and to Honora's mother, Helen MacCarthy, her jointure. Sarsfield was also elected one of the members for Dublin, but he probably never took his seat. He was away in Connacht, shaping the raw levies of the West, and beseeching James's Secretary, Lord Melfort, in vain for horses. In spite of all difficulties, Sarsfield raised in Connacht 2,000 horse, and succeeded in capturing Sligo from the Huguenot refugee, St. Sauvent, after a gallant defence of four days. The capture of this important port for King James was one of the two signal successes which crowned Sarsfield's glorious, but unlucky name. This splendid soldier never actually commanded an army in the field except at Sligo, and at Ballineety, the ford by the Shannon, his second triumph.

For a time things promised so well for James in Ireland that it seemed to William of Orange that his father-in-law, was likely to be King once more, across the Channel at any rate. Therefore, William judged it necessary to take the field against James in Ireland in

person. He sailed for Ireland, with 36,000 Dutch troops, and landed at Carrick Fergus in June, 1690.

William pressed on down from the North upon Dublin, eager for a short and decisive campaign. James vascilated, waited for troops from France, and proposed a descent on England from France. The Jacobite army retreated southward when they should have held their ground, and held their ground at Oldbridge, near Drogheda, on the Boyne, when they had better have retreated.

There is no need to recount the well-known story of the Battle of the Boyne here, except to mention that Sarsfield and Berwick both led regiments of cavalry on that eventful day, although the brunt of the action fell on neither of them. Tyrconnel, already failing, commanded a division.

Before the battle was decided, James fled to Dublin, twenty miles south. He summoned a Council hastily, and described his defeat as due to the Irish troops, who, he declared, ran away. "Then His Majesty beat them all in the race!" was the remark of the witty Duchess of Tyrconnel, when she heard of the King's peevish excuse. There was no doubt then that the battle was lost, and Dublin was in confusion and panic. A Protestant mob began to plunder the houses of the Catholic gentry. Sarsfield's house was plundered, and entirely destroyed by fire, in spite of the efforts of Colonel FitzGerald, a leading Protestant, who had taken over the government of the city. Sarsfield himself was rallying his cavalry and withdrawing them to the Shannon. Honora, we may hope, was out of danger in France, but it is possible she may have been in Ireland.

James continued his flight the next day, breaking down bridges behind him, to prevent pursuit, until he reached Waterford. He had previously secured a ship in which to escape to France in case of need.

The Irish leaders were heartily glad to be rid of James. The words attributed to Patrick Sarsfield :—"Exchange Kings, and we will fight you over again," faithfully reflect Irish opinion. After the Boyne, Sarsfield became, increasingly, the exponent of Irish aspirations. He openly sided with "the French party," as opposed to "the English party," now represented by Tyrconnel. Ireland was all Sarsfield cared for, and it was to Louis XIV., and not James II. that he looked for help for Ireland. Soon Ireland began to care for Sarsfield. "The King?" said one of Sarsfield's colonels at Athlone. "The King is nothing to me! I obey Sarsfield!"

The Irish generals, and Berwick, having withdrawn beyond the Shannon, fortified themselves in Limerick and Athlone, from both of which the English were repulsed. The hero of the first siege of Limerick is Sarsfield. The story of how—by a brilliant cavalry manœuvre, under cover of night—he intercepted the artillery of William of Orange at Ballineety, seized it, and blew up the cannons, without loss, and sped away across the Shannon again beyond pursuit, is one of the most stirring tales of Irish history. William retired from before Limerick, and the war dragged on.

As the winter passed, Louis XIV. became convinced that James II. had despaired of regaining his hold on Ireland too soon. In May, 1691, he sent reinforcements to Ireland under St. Ruth, who took command, not now for King James, but for his master, Louis XIV.

Sarsfield, who knew—none better—that the retrieval of the Jacobite cause in Ireland was due, in large measure, to his gallant exertions, was not a little hurt and disgusted at being superseded by the Frenchman. He was poorly compensated by the empty patent of the Earldom of Lucan, conveyed to him from James at St. Germains by Tyrconnel. St. Ruth was not conciliatory; he could speak no English, and Sarsfield scarcely suppressed his annoyance at "being pestered by a popinjay."

Berwick was recalled to France by his father soon after the first siege of Limerick. He was received by Louis XIV. at Marly, and Dangeau, writing of this in his Memoirs, adds :—"He will now serve France."

In June, Ginckle took Athlone, which St. Ruth might have held had he heeded Sarsfield. St. Ruth's jealousy of Sarsfield also probably turned the battle of Aughrim into the sore defeat it proved. A cannon-ball killed the French general instantly. No arrangements had been made to replace him, and Sarsfield only knew of his death when he found himself among a crowd of disordered fugitives. Then he took command, "did marvels," and conducted the retreat to Limerick. Sarsfield was now the only Irish leader of the army, for Tyrconnel was dead.

During the second weary and hopeless siege of Limerick, Sarsfield was informed by Ginckle that William was ready to purchase his services at Sarsfield's own price. Sarsfield had nothing left but his sword, and his honour, and he knew well that Dutch William was no unworthy master. All was lost, and the Stuarts were not worth fighting for. Yet he refused the offer with courtesy.

The Stuart cause was hopeless. Ireland was desolate. The leaders of the Irish now counselled the raising of the

siege, and submission upon honourable terms. On September 23rd, 1691, Sarsfield gave a reluctant consent to a Treaty, which provided that all Roman Catholics should enjoy the exercise of their religion "as in the reign of Charles II." French ships, with substantial reinforcements, sailed up the Shannon immediately after the capitulation, but Sarsfield stuck honourably to his bargain, and the troops were not landed.

"The Treaty Stone" in Limerick to-day stands as a monument of England's breach of faith, and want of loyalty to

> "That Treaty broken e'er the ink
> Wherewith 'twas writ could dry."

The Irish troops were paraded and addressed by Ginckle, and by Sarsfield. Ginckle recommended William as master, Sarsfield, Louis. Exile was the fate of the Irish soldiers in any case.

It was a moving scene on that morning of October 12th, 1691, when the final choice had to be made. The broken walls of Limerick were black with citizens, the neighbouring hills were covered with awe-struck peasantry. The air was full of the wailing of women soon to be left desolate. The deputies of the three Kings, William III., James II., and Louis XIV., stood by the flag. Through the deep hush came the sound of the tread of 15,000 fighting men.

Here is the only report left by an eye-witness :— "Hundreds of the soldiers were in rags and unshod, but all bore themselves well, and had a dauntless aspect. It had been agreed that the men who were to take service in France were to defile beyond an appointed spot; those

who were willing to remain were to turn away. The choice of the immense majority was soon seen."

The column was headed by 1,400 Irish guards—Ginckle's envy. They marched on, past England's flag. Seven men only turned aside. The next regiment, of Ulstermen, yielded a larger harvest to the conquerors. But when all had defiled, Ginckle had obtained but a few thousand horse, and fifteen hundred foot. "Sarsfield looked on with pride at the spectacle exhibiting the noble spirit of our race"—proceeds the eye-witness—"These men," he said, "are leaving all that is most dear in life for a strange land in which they will have to endure much, to serve in an army that hardly knows our people; but they are true to Ireland, and have still hopes for her cause; we will make another Ireland in the armies of the great King of France." Thus began "the Flight of the Wild Geese."

"*Righ Shemus* he has gone to France, and left his crown behind.
Ill-luck be theirs, both day and night, put running in his mind!
Lord Lucan followed after, with his Slashers, brave and true,
And now the doleful keen is raised :—'What will poor Ireland do!'"

Sarsfield went to St. Germains, where, by this time, his wife Honora, with her two children, her little daughter, and her son James, was already established. The boy was a worthy son of his handsome, gallant father. But Sarsfield probably had scarcely seen his children. It now seemed

likely that he would see them even less than ever, for James II. made over his Army to his generous host, the King of France, and the regiments were scattered to various places. Berwick and Sarsfield were sent to Flanders, with the Irish Brigade to fight their new master's battle against England there. The Duke of Berwick was already beginning to earn for himself an honourable reputation as a commander. He and Sarsfield were together at the Battle of Steinkirk in 1692, where Sarsfield's courage and ability earned the esteem of the French army, and caused him to be honourably mentioned in Luxemburg's despatches.

It seems probable that all was not well between Berwick and Sarsfield at this time, comrades in arms as they were. From Berwick's distinctly acrimonious criticism of Sarsfield in his Memoirs, the thought arises that something more than the natural emulation of noble fellow-soldiers lay between them. The deduction is that already Berwick had become attached to Honora Sarsfield.

The two exiled Jacobites met William of Orange again upon the field of Landen. The French army was victorious, and William was forced to retreat. But the victory was dearly bought. Berwick was taken prisoner, but afterwards exchanged. Over ten thousand of the best troops of the King of France fell upon that red field, from whence Sarsfield was borne, mortally wounded, on July 29th, 1693. As the tall Irishman lay low, he drew his hand from his bosom, and found it covered with his life-blood. "Would that this was shed for Ireland!" he whispered.

The next day, comforted by the rites of his religion, the handsome valiant, generous, luckless, well-beloved

Irishman passed. The Irish mourned their hero in a dirge that has become known all the world over :—

"Oh! Patrick Sarsfield, Ireland's Wonder,
Who fought in the fields like Heaven's thunder!
One of King James's chief Commanders,
Now lies the food of crows in Flanders.
Och Hone! Och Hone!

Berwick declared that Sarsfield was "no general," and according to French rule, perhaps he was not. He lacked training and opportunity. But Sarsfield was more than a mere general. He was an ideal, and a hero. He was an embodiment of the Irish spirit, which, defeated, came again under other skies, and lives to-day.

Sarsfield's empty title descended to his son James. But this young man, in the coming years, was to win by his own sword a title higher still. He became Captain of the King of Spain's Body-Guard, and was made a Knight of the Golden Fleece by Philip V. of Spain. But though his sword was Spain's, his heart was Ireland's. In 1715, he went back to Ireland—his father's own son—in the hopes of a Jacobite rising in that country. But "the Fifteen" found Ireland lifeless. The Stuarts were not worth fighting for again. There was no rising then. Four years later (May, 1719), James died at St. Omer, the last of his name. He was still a young man. Probably he, too—like his half-brother—inherited his mother's fatal delicacy.

Sarsfield's daughter flits across the page of history as the wife of Theodore de Neuhof, "the phantom King of Corsica." Corsica was nominally dependent upon Genoa until it was ceded to France in 1768. In 1731 Corsica

revolted against Genoa, and created itself into a "Kingdom," under its first, and only, King, Theodore. About this time Theodore de Neuhof made a missionary tour of Europe upon Corsica's behalf, and his own. It was even suggested that "the Isle of Unrest" might form a convenient little Kingdom for the Old and Young Pretender. Neither accepted the suggestion, but Honora's daughter accepted Theodore. Hers was an unfortunate fate. Theodore ended his days in London, a pensioner on the bounty of Horace Walpole. He was eventually imprisoned in the King's Bench prison for debt, but was released. He gave in his schedule the Kingdom of Corsica to his creditors! He died in Soho in 1756. The Earl of Oxford wrote the following epitaph for a tablet near his grave in St. Anne's Church, Dean Street :—

> "The Grave, great teacher, to a level brings
> Heros and beggars, galley-slaves and kings,
> But Theodore this moral learned e'er dead.
> Fate poured its lesson on his living head.
> Bestowed a Kingdom—and denied him bread."

After Sarsfield's death, the widowed Countess of Lucan remained at the Court of St. Germains one of the many who, having lost all, flocked there as to a rallying point. It was a gloomy little Court, sad and severe, despite the abundant youth and beauty which adorned it. The Queen was pawning her jewels, one by one, to relieve the destitution of ruined Jacobite nobles, and their families, who had sacrificed all for the Stuarts. The King was sunk in melancholy, and in austere devotions. Anthony Hamilton, in his Memoirs, writes that "There was no room for any

who did not spend (or pretend to spend) half the day in prayer. Misfortune made people quarrelsome. In summer—when it did not rain—every poor pretext was seized upon for out-door amusements. In winter, the ladies occupied the too leisured hours between slumbering upon couches, and in washing their 'cornettes and fal-lals,' and hanging them out to dry in Berwick's garden. The idea of love-making made the hair stand on end. Love was, in fact, proscribed. It was held to be the least excusable of weaknesses. Yet, in spite of repression, gallantry broke out, now and then, in astonishing adventures."

One of these adventures had for its actors Honora Sarsfield and James FitzJames. We can well picture how the light and lively nature of the beautiful young Irishwoman revolted from the atmosphere of gloom and depression with which she found herself surrounded. She may have grieved sincerely enough for her hero-husband, for all that a lesser man might have been more to his wife. But two years—almost—had passed since Sarsfield's death. Probably a much longer time had elapsed since he and Honora had seen each other. Besides, there was the natural rebound of one full of eager vitality, and love of life. It is certain from his Memoirs that the Duke of Berwick was passionately devoted to Honora. After her death he lavished the same devotion upon their only child. This son of theirs records Honora's enormous influence upon his father. He writes that "the influence of his first wife, and the advice of his father, James II., persuaded the Duke of Berwick to renounce entirely the sins of his youth." These sins seem to have been venal when compared with those of his contemporaries.

Dangeau, in his Memoirs, writes :—"On Wednesday last (March 26th, 1695), M. de Berwick, natural son of the King of England, married at Montmarte the widow Lord Lucan (sic.). The match was a love one, and the King and Queen of England consented to it with repugnance."

It was natural that Berwick's royal father, and Queen Mary Beatrice, with whom he was a great favourite, should have desired a more exalted alliance for their loyal, and well-beloved James. But it would seem that their displeasure was short lived. Honora's bright and sunny nature must have told in her favour. Soon Mary Beatrice appointed the new Duchess to be one of the Ladies of the Bedchamber, and ere long became deeply attached to her.

Dangeau mentions also that Louis XIV. gave the Duke and Duchess of Berwick apartments at Versailles, because he knew that this would be agreeable to the Queen of England, always a prime favourite with Le Grand Monarche. We catch a glimpse of the fair Honora teaching the ladies at Versailles to dance Irish jigs and English country dances. In the November after her marriage, we read of the King and Queen of England visiting the King of France in state, on which occasion Queen Mary Beatrice was attended by four ladies—the Duchess of Berwick, the Duchess of Tyrconnel, and the Ladies Almonde and Bulkeley.

The only child of Honora and the Duke of Berwick was born on October 21st, 1696. He was christened James Francis, and is known to history as the Marquis of Tynmouth, and afterwards as the Duke of Lira in Spain. But already signs of consumption—that dread disease ever curiously inimical to the house of Stuart—had appeared in

the beautiful young Duchess of Berwick. Honora's bright cheeks, her shining eyes, and even that vivid vitality which disguised her frailness, were but marks of that malady from which—then—there was no recovery. Her happiness was brief. Scarcely three years after her second marriage, on January 16th, 1698, Honora de Burgh breathed her last.

The Duke of Berwick remained unwed for a couple of years. Then, on April 18th, 1700, he married Anne Bulkeley, niece of Lord Bulkeley and grand-daughter of Lord Blantyre. "The Fair Nanette" of Anthony Hamilton's Memoirs had long been attached to the Jacobite Court. She had been Honora's fellow Lady-in-Waiting. In the autumn of the next year, 1701, James II. died, worn out by disappointments. In the eyes of his Irish subjects he ever cut but a sorry figure. Nevertheless, there were many sad hearts round his death-bed.

The second Duchess of Berwick—who survived her husband—seems to have "always acted the part of a typical step-mother to Honora de Burgh's son." No doubt her maternal jealousy was provoked by Berwick's tender affection for his first-born. The lad inherited his father's military genius. He also inherited his mother's delicacy, which showed itself in his early manhood.

As years went on, and the Jacobite cause became hopeless, the loyal Berwick became a naturalized French subject, with his father's consent. He rose to be Marshal of France. In "the Fifteen" he preferred the service of his adopted country to the lost cause of his half-brother. But his son, James, Marquis of Tynmouth, remained true to the Stuarts. He accompanied the Old Pretender to Scotland in "the Fifteen." To the end of his life he was

ever his royal uncle's affectionate nephew, and devoted servant. After "the Fifteen," Berwick seeing no prospect of a Restoration, determined to provide securely for his eldest son. He made over to him his Spanish possessions, and his Dukedom of Lira, and sent him to Spain "to declare himself a Spaniard." The affectionate son sadly obeyed his father. He married a Spanish Countess, and became a Field Marshal of Spain. But he remained at heart—like his half-brother—a Jacobite.

While the Duke of Lira was conducting the siege of Gaeta in 1734, he heard of his father's death. Berwick, like Sarsfield, died a soldier's death. He was struck in the neck by a cannon-ball when mounting his horse at Phillippsburg, fighting against Prince Eugene. His son Edward—child of "the fair Nanette"—was at his side, and was bathed in his father's blood.

To this son, Edward—known as the Duke of FitzJames —descended Berwick's French estates. Both he and the Duke of Lira have direct descendants among the French and Spanish nobility to-day.

The Duke of Lira did not long survive his father. He died in 1738, at the age of 42, of consumption, which had been his heritage from his mother, fair Honora Sarsfield.

Honora's brief life was lived in dark days. Yet, it may well be that those who lived in them saw gleams of the sunshine of hope and love. Men were born, men lived, and loved and hoped. It was true that Eirinn lay still—numb, nerveless, crushed. Worse, she lay wounded, and from that unstaunched wound there flowed her life-blood—those brave sons, like Sarsfield, who could find no chance to serve her within the bounds of their native shores. The Rapparees were hunted from

her mountains. The "Wild Geese" flew from her deserted and barren cliffs. But there was a Great Purpose in it all. It has been ordained that the Celtic leaven shall work in the nations of the Old World, and of the New. The Irishman has ever gone out seeking—seeking. Sometimes it was *Tir-na-nOg* he sought—"The Land of the Ever Young." Sometimes, it was *Hy-Breasail*—"The Islands of the Blest." Sometimes he sought Freedom, sometimes, just a refuge; sometimes fortune, sometimes—God. We of happier and less adventurous times feel sure that these adventurers found what they sought. They found it for the reason that to search may be better than to attain, to journey better than to arrive.

If the life of this daughter of Eirinn seems to strike a note which is feeble and sad, if it seems to close in dreary times for her native land, yet to us, who look back to-day, there seems nevertheless much cause for hope and thankfulness. Never was Nation purged and tried like this Nation of Sorrows. Never was Nation more miraculously preserved and purified by suffering. Ireland still lives, because her daughters to-day are—thank God—no less worthy than were those brave women and good comrades of the days of old.

CONCLUSION.

The noteworthy Irishwomen of later days followed calm paths to fame. For the most part their achievements were on the stage, or in literature. Great rulers there were none. Ireland ceased to be Irish without becoming English. The conditions of life changed, and not for the better. Irish people looked back, constantly and regretfully, because they could not look forward. Then, in the middle of the last century a terrible calamity swept over Eirinn, and in the Great Famine of 1847-9 much was lost besides human lives. That was, perhaps, the darkest hour of a long dark night. To-day, we can see the dawn. Meanwhile through all the changes—the swift changes for the worse, and the slow, and secret changes for the better—the qualities which marked those early great Irishwomen, and which made womanhood reverenced in Ireland as it is in few other nations, remained in the daughters of Eirinn. They possess them still.

Enough may be seen, even through the rifts in the mists of time—enough has been said even in these slight sketches—to show that Irishwomen of old were not the wild, ignorant, uncultured creatures that some may have imagined. There is probably no country in the world with a more fascinating history than Ireland. Its study reveals a world of real romance and unfading glamour. It is peopled with personalities striking and captivating, moving through stirring scenes. Perhaps the sadness of later Irish history accounts for the fact that this world has been almost unexplored. When the heavy purple

rain-clouds hang low over "the fair hills of Ireland," there is ever a band of silvery light in the sky where the mountain-tops touch the clouds. There is light behind even the gloomy pages of Ireland's story.

The world's far rim is radiant with lost light.
Who is going out to seek
That hidden Land of Sunsets beyond sight,
Behind the highest peak?

That Land where gold days gather to set right
Old wrongs now understood,
Where men clasp hands, rejoicing after fight
In common, new-found good.

Eyes trained to see that world's fair rim are bright
Though tears shine on the cheek;
They look behind the rain—beyond the night.
Who is going out to seek?

If these little sketches of Irishwomen awake enough interest, or curiosity, in the minds of readers to draw them on to the closer and more accurate study of the history of Ireland, the writer's object will have been amply fulfilled.

[THE END.]

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